# ERN RAMPE

THE CANADIAN COUNCIL ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
LE CONSEIL CANADIEN DE DÉVELOPPEMENT SOCIAL

POLICY
CONCEPTS

THE COOPERS
& LYBRAND CONSULTING GROUP

## Employability Resources Network

The Employability Resources Network (ERN) is a three-year demonstration project funded by Employment and Immigration Canada under the Innovations program.

ERN is the responsibility of three organizations: The Canadian Council on Social Development, The Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group, and The Norton Group.

ERN's purpose is to explore and evaluate methods for helping unemployed people get off social assistance and back into the job market, through employability programs currently under way across Canada.

ERN will select at least 10 to 15 demonstration projects for an in-depth evaluation of the different approaches used to help social assistance recipients and others re-enter the labour force. It will assess the projects' effectiveness for different groups, such as older unemployed workers, women, native people, disabled persons, visible minorities and youth.

ERN will establish a standardized framework for evaluating employability enhancement projects. The framework will provide useful information not only for government policy-makers, but also for business, social service and employment agencies, and program administrators.

ERN will develop an information resource centre. It will include an inventory of national and international employment projects, an evalution data base and a documentation library. A communications network will serve organizations and individuals in the employment enhancement field.

**The Employability Resources Network,**
**55 Parkdale Avenue,**
**Ottawa K1Y 1E5. Tel: (613) 728-1879.**
**Fax: (613) 728-9387.**
**Strategic Management Committee:** Keith Norton, The Norton Group; Terrance Hunsley, CCSD; J.P. Herzog, Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group
**Contract Administration/Technical Support:** Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group (613) 237-3702
**Communications:** CCSD (613) 728-1865 and Media Concepts Communications (416) 486-1800
**Information Resources:** CCSD
**Demonstration Evaluation:** Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group
**Quebec Liaison:** CCSD (514) 288-1687

## Ressources pour l'amélioration des possibilités d'emploi

Le projet Ressources pour l'amélioration des possibilités d'emploi (RAMPE) est un projet témoin d'une durée de trois ans financé par Emploi et Immigration Canada dans le cadre du programme Innovations.

Trois organisations assument la responsabilité de RAMPE : le Conseil canadien de Développement social, Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group et Le Norton Group.

Le mandat de RAMPE est d'explorer et d'évaluer, dans le cadre de programmes d'amélioration des possibilitiés d'emploi ayant cours dans l'ensemble du Canada, différentes formules pouvant aider les chômeurs à se soustraire à l'aide sociale et à réintégrer le marché du travail.

RAMPE sélectionnera dix à quinze projets témoins pour évaluer minutieusement les différentes stratégies favorisant la réinsertion des assistés sociaux et d'autres personnes sur le marché du travail. Il appréciera l'efficacité des projets visant différents groupes tels que les chômeurs d'un certain âge, les femmes, les autochtones, les handicapés, les minorités visibles et les jeunes.

RAMPE élaborera un schéma d'évaluation destiné aux projets d'amélioration des débouchés. Ce schéma fournira des renseignements utiles non seulement aux décideurs politiques du gouvernement, mais aussi aux entreprises, aux organismes de services sociaux et d'emploi, et aux administrateurs de programmes.

RAMPE créera également un centre national de documentation. Celui-ci comprendra l'inventaire des programmes d'amélioration des perspectives d'emploi mis en place au Canada et à l'étranger, une base de données sur l'évaluation et un centre de documentation. Un réseau de communication sera à la disposition des organismes et des particuliers qui s'occupent de l'amélioration des perspectives d'emploi.

**Ressources pour l'amélioration des possibilités d'emploi, 55, avenue Parkdale, Ottawa K1Y 1E5.**
**Tél.: (613) 728-1879.**
**Télécopieur: (613) 728-9387.**
**Comité de gestion stratégique:** Keith Norton, Le Norton Group; Terrance Hunsley, CCDS; J.P. Herzog, Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group
**Administration des contrats/support technique:** Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group (613) 237-3702
**Communications:** CCDS (613) 728-1865 et Media Concepts Communications (416) 486-1800
**Ressources documentaires:** CCDS
**Évaluation des projets témoins:** Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group
**Liaison au Québec:** CCDS (514) 288-1687

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# EMPLOYABILITY RESOURCES NETWORK

## Report on the Evaluation Study of the Halifax City Employment Support Centre

**Final Report**

**June, 1991**

# EMPLOYABILITY RESOURCES NETWORK

# REPORT ON THE EVALUATION STUDY OF THE HALIFAX CITY EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT CENTRE

## Final Report

**June, 1991**

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**Exhibit 1:** **What Works for Whom**
Halifax City Employment Support Centre, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Clientele: Social Assistance Recipients (Job Ready, Fixable Barriers to Employment)

| **Intervention** | **Intended Output** | **Impact** (Leads to) | **Effect** (Result) | **Comments** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transitional Employment Program | Provide clients with first real job experience. | Employability enhanced | Employment at placement or acquisitions of transferable skills. | Useful for sole support parents and women with no job experience. |
| Pre-employment Program | Provide clients with counselling or services appropriate to barrier. On-the-job training. | Employability enhanced.<br><br>Removal of barriers. | Enrolment in further training, Job Finding Clubs, Transitional Program. | Typically 6-12 months before barriers overcome. ESC staff find this intervention most flexible in meeting client's needs. |
| Employment Support Services | Provide assistance with résumé writing, practice in interviewing skills, etc. | Increased job search skills. | Employment | Provides support to job ready clients during job search. |
| Individual Program | Direct purchase of services or training on individual basis. | Employability enhanced. | Employment | Enables staff to tailor program to individual's needs. |
| Job Finding Clubs | Provide assistance in finding job. | Employment Offers. | Employment | Provides supportive environment. |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Conclusions

The Employment Support Centre offers the Halifax City Social Planning Department a workable option for dealing with the increasing numbers of social assistance clients. The ESC has been particularly effective in identifying their clients' needs and providing them with appropriate services or counselling. It does so through a thorough assessment process which identifies clients as job ready, having employment barriers that can be addressed, or clients who are not suitable. The assessment and assignment to a classification continues to be refined. ESC then targets client needs by offering a range of 5 services (e.g., pre-employment) to clients based on the extent of barriers to employment they face (further described below). The objective is for participants to find employment or pursue further training.

The project had success in enabling participants to find employment (66% at the time of the survey). In fact, given the fact that only 20 to 25% of participants are job ready, this points to the ESC's success in targeting and meeting client needs. Analysis of the program data revealed that 71% of job ready clients found employment, and 66% of clients with barriers were employed after receiving services from the ESC. It should also be noted that the ESC refers job ready clients to the Sobey's Training project, reducing the number of job-ready clients they assist. The ESC was also successful in assisting participants to maintain employment (68% of employed participants stayed in their first jobs).

The ESC was successful in assisting clients to reduce their dependence on social assistance. In addition, the project resulted in an improved sense of employment readiness for participants and was effective in improving two specific areas perceived as barriers: taking care of family matters that interrupt the work day; and being interviewed for a job. Less than half of participants reported that they were financially better off after the project. This is not surprising since participants most often are paid low wages, and there are costs associated with employment (e.g. loss of dental and medical benefits from social assistance, day care, etc.). Finally, two services perceived as most helpful in contributing to employability are résumé preparation assistance and career counselling. Work placements, negotiating work placements and job finding clubs were perceived as helpful

**Exhibit 2: Evaluation Issues and Conclusions**

| | Issues | Conclusions Suggested by the Evaluation |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Did the Program assist the participants in obtaining employment; or maintaining employment? | The project was successful in assisting participants to find employment (66%). 68% continued in their first job. |
| 2. | Did the Program end or reduce social assistance? | Yes. The project reduced dependence on social assistance. Monthly social assistance payments dropped form $663.76 to $537.51 after the project for a difference of $126.25. |
| 3. | Did the Program strengthen the participants' personal sense of employment readiness? | Yes. |
| 4. | Did the Program improve the participants' financial situation? | No. Slightly less than half (44%) of all participants felt that they were financially better off after the project. Mean annual income rose only slightly from $9,817 to $9,920 after the project. |
| 5. | What were the costs of the Program compared to social assistance? | The per capita cost of the project was $770.42. It is estimated that social assistance savings will recoup the cost of an ESC session within 6.1 months. |
| 6. | What interventions contributed most to increasing employability? | The two services perceived as most helpful were résumé preparation assistance and career counselling. |

by the smallest percentage of respondents. This is likely an artifact of the small numbers participating, and not a reflection on the quality of the services. The success rate of ESC job finding clubs was high.

The evaluation identified the assessment tool used by the ESC and the targeting of services to particular types of clients as an important aspect of the ESC.

## Program Description

The Employment Support Centre is an outgrowth and expansion of the City of Halifax Social Planning Department's ongoing efforts to assist social assistance recipients make the transition to employment. After a thorough assessment and the development of individualized case plans, clients are referred to internal and/or external services. Exhibit 1, opposite the preceding page, highlights the project's interventions, impacts and effects.

The logic model in Appendix I provides a description of the project at a glance.

## Clientele

The original target population of the Employment Support Centre included all individuals who had been on the social assistance caseload for a three month period and who were classified as able bodied unemployed (ABU). However, ESC staff realized that the ABU classification was misleading and that a large number were improperly classified. This resulted in the development of a coding system. By the project's second year, this coding process was in place with the ESC accepting as suitable those applicants who were job ready or who had "fixable" employment barriers. Further, details can be found on pages 5 and 6 of this report regarding the ESC's target population.

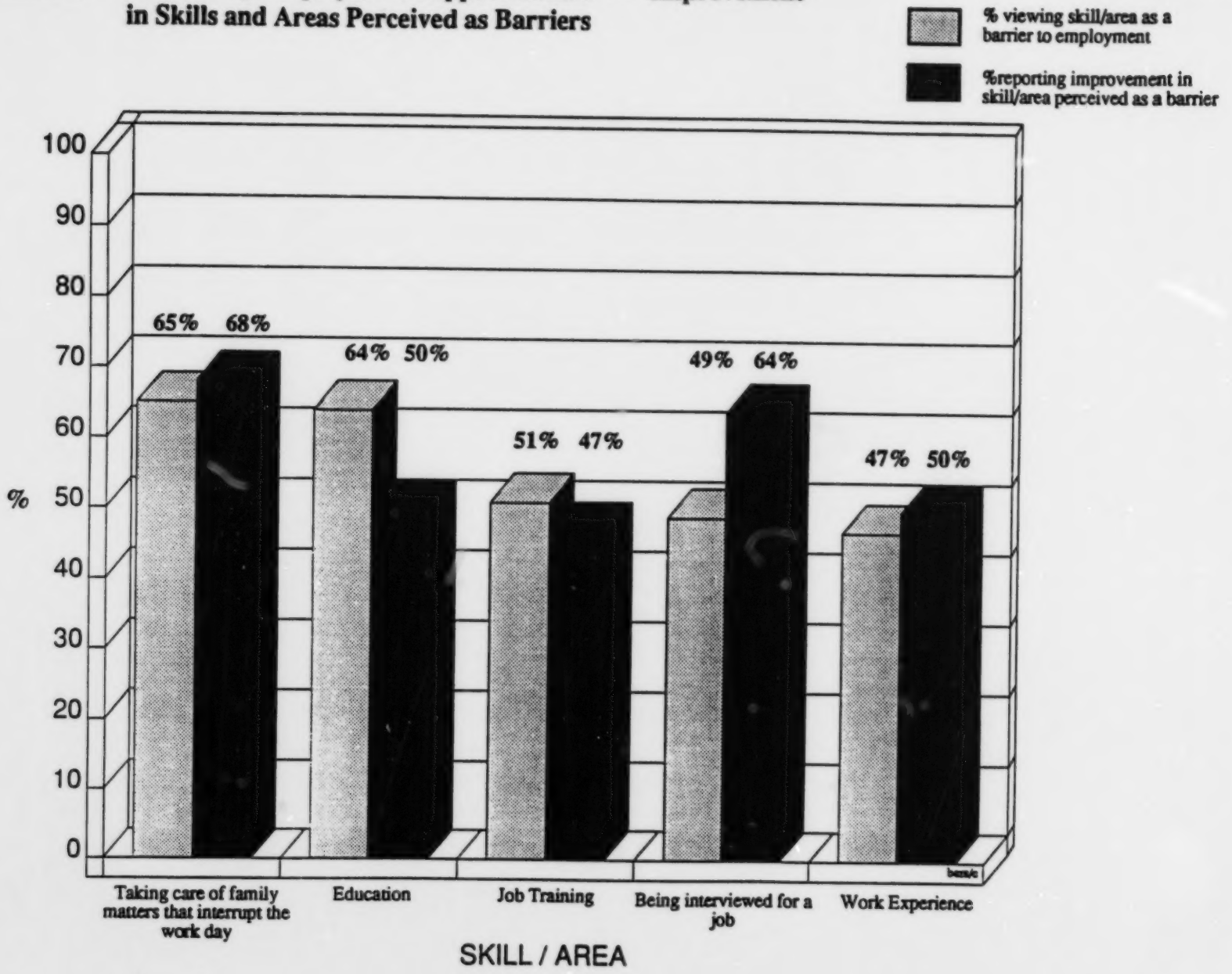
## Operation

After a thorough assessment, an individual case plan is developed with the client. The client is then referred to the appropriate ESC services or external specialty service. Internal services include: the transitional employment program to provide clients with work experience; the pre-employment program for clients facing some barriers; the employment supportive services which provides job ready clients with job search assistance and support; the individual program that permits the direct purchase of services or training; and job finding clubs.

## Issues and Findings

Six issues, developed during the evaluation assessment were examined in evaluating the ERC. They are listed, along with the conclusions suggested by the data collected, in Exhibit 2 on the opposite page.

**Exhibit 3: Halifax City Employment Support Centre — Improvement in Skills and Areas Perceived as Barriers**



1. The Halifax City ESC was successful in assisting participants to obtain. Sixty-six (66%) percent of participants were employed at some point after receiving services from the EIC. The ESC did help participants to maintain employment. Sixty-eight percent of employment participants continued in their first job. Completing the project gives an advantage to participants. Job finding clubs have been effective at the ESC for job ready clients.

2. The project reduced dependence on social assistance. Monthly payments dropped from $663.76 to $537.51 after the project for a difference of $126.25.

3. The Halifax City ESC resulted in an improved sense of employment readiness of participants. For skills perceived as barriers to employment, the project was most successful in improving two specific skills: taking care of family matters that interrupt the work day; and being interviewed for a job. Exhibit 3, on the opposite page, outlines the five main areas viewed as barriers and the percentage of respondents who reported an improvement.

4. Overall, slightly less than half (44%) of all participants felt that they were better off financially after the project than before the project began. Mean annual income levels rose only slightly to $9,920 after the project from $9,817. This is likely related to a number of factors including low wages, loss of benefits (e.g. medical / dental benefits) paid by social assistance, and the costs associated with employment (e.g. day care).

5. The per capita cost of the project was $770.42. It is estimated that social assistance savings will recoup the cost of an ESC session in 6.1 months.

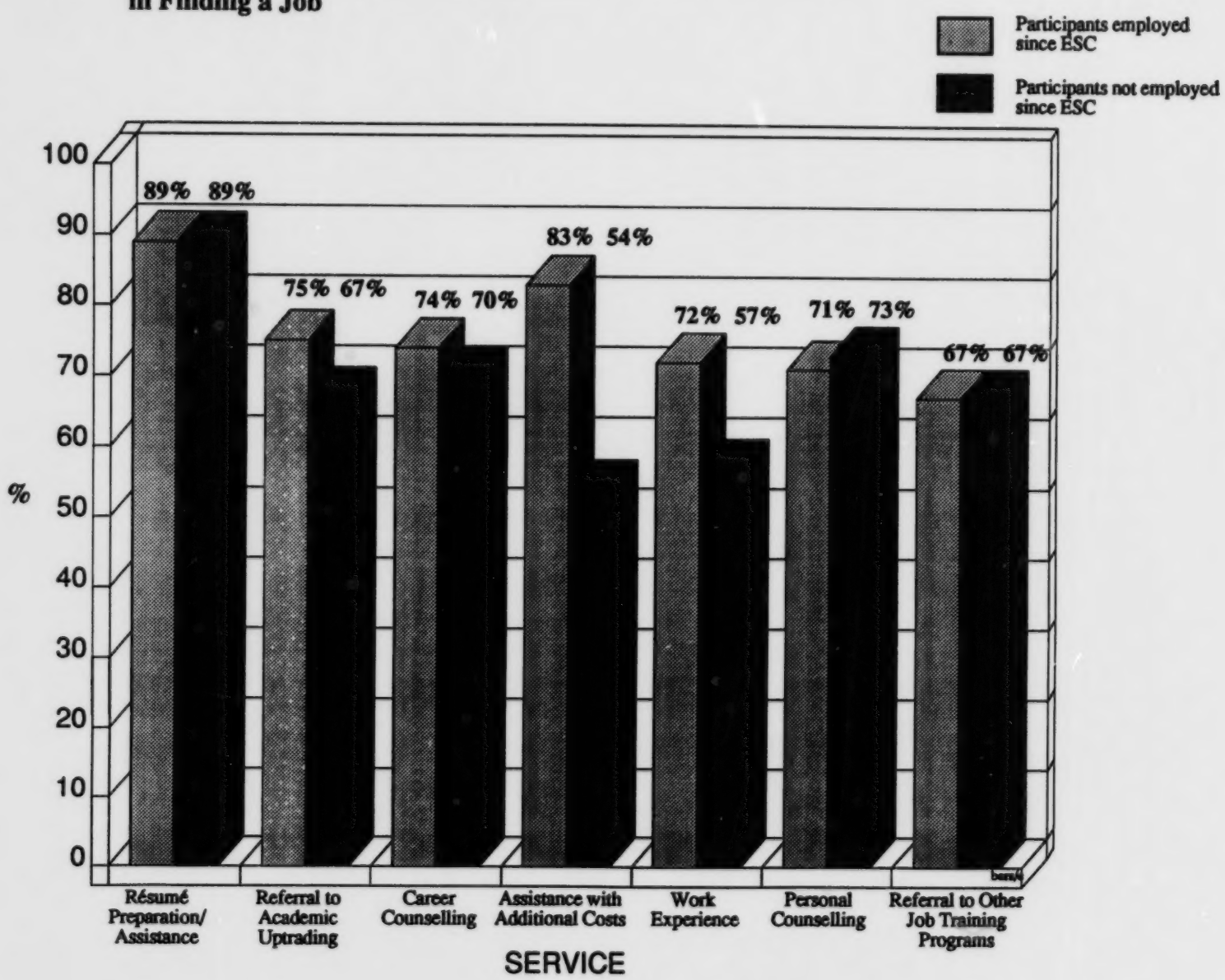
6. The two services perceived as most helpful in contributing to employability are résumé preparation assistance and career counselling. Work placements, negotiating work placements and job finding clubs were perceived as helpful by the smallest percentage of respondents, likely an artifact of the small numbers participating and not a reflection on the quality of services. Exhibit 4, overleaf, lists the main services viewed as helpful.

## Recommendations

Against these findings, we make the following recommendations which are intended as enhancements of the ESC. We recognize that some of our recommendations are beyond the control of project management, but suggest they be included in future funding proposals.

1. A related recommendation is the expansion of the Pre-Employment Program, and in certain instances (i.e., client need for longer period of involvement) the Transitional Program, from its present length of

**Exhibit 4: Halifax City Employment Support Centre — Services Helpful in Finding a Job**



six months to one year. (N.B. The program was expanded in the 1990/91 submission)

2. We recommend that the ESC continue to target their services to the different levels of "job readiness" - of clients. In addition, one on one counselling should continue to be offered to the ESC client.

3. We recommend that the ESC continue to monitor the effectiveness of the screening process and make modifications to the screening process and services offered as required.

## Lessons Learned

This evaluation was not conducted in isolation, but was carried out as part of a series of evaluations under the auspices of the Employability Resources Network (ERN).

The evaluation highlighted the importance of collecting detailed information on participants, such as that collected by the ESC. The information provides a basis for targeting services to particular types of clients and permits long-term planning for project needs. In addition, the data is particularly useful in evaluating the success of the project and making changes to enhance the project's effectiveness.

During the course of these ERN evaluations to date, it has become apparent that this vital component of projects is often overlooked. The importance of this function cannot be over-emphasized. Project management should consider this when planning a project or submitting proposals. Indeed, funders may want to consider the inclusion of this type of component as a criteria for funding.

Another issue that has come to light during the course of this and other evaluations is targeting particular services to the skills and capabilities a client presents upon entry into the program. For instance, job ready clients rarely require lifeskills training and there is little value added by having these participants go through this stage of training. In fact, this may have the opposite effect on clients who are eager to obtain employment leaving them impatient and frustrated. Project designers and funders should consider this when planning training modules and consider direct entry into job skills training for clients who are socially, emotionally and mentally prepared for this phase of training.

# 1.
# INTRODUCTION

The Halifax City Employment Support Centre is an "employment readiness" program, which has been evaluated under the auspices of the Employability Resources Network (ERN) Initiative. This report, prepared by The Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group which also conducted the evaluation assessment, presents the results of the evaluation study of the Halifax City Employment Support Centre.

## Purpose of the Study

An Evaluation Assessment of the Halifax City Employment Support Centre was completed in December, 1989.

Consistent with The Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group (CLCG) and ERN approach to carrying out evaluation activities, this assessment provided the basis for the evaluation study which was conducted between February and April, 1990.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate what interventions aimed at enhancing employability work best for particular types (e.g. the able bodied unemployed) of participants. Six evaluation issues were examined to answer this question.

## Evaluation Objectives

Pursuant to the Evaluation Assessment and a decision by the ERN Evaluation Steering Committee, the issues that were addressed in the evaluation study (together with anticipated quality of data) are contained in Exhibit 1 below.

**Exhibit 1:**

**COVERAGE OF ISSUES**
**FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE**
**HALIFAX CITY EMPLOYMENT**

| ISSUES | DATA COVERAGE |
|---|---|
| 1. Did the project assist the participants in:<br>- obtaining employment<br>- maintaining employment | H |
| 2. Did the project end/reduce the participants' dependence on social assistance? | H |
| 3. Did the project strengthen the participants' personal sense of employment readiness? | H |
| 4. Did the project improve the participants' financial situation? | H |
| 5. What were the costs of the program compared to social assistance? | L |
| 6. What interventions contribute most to increasing employability? | H |

Coverage:
H = High
M = Medium
L = Low

More explicit details concerning the foregoing issues with accompanying research questions, indicators and data sources are contained in Appendix II to this report.

A Technical Appendix, under separate cover, includes statistical tables.

## Structure of the Report

This report is structured in the following manner:

- **Background**
  - Mission statement, objectives and benefits of ERN initiative.
  - Halifax City Employment Support Centre objectives and a brief description of the Halifax City Employment Support Centre operations/activities.
- **Study Design**
  - Describes how the data for the evaluation study research were collected and analyzed.
- **Facts, Findings and Conclusions**
  - Outlines for each evaluation issue and research question the salient facts, findings and conclusions reached.
- **Recommendations**
  - Outlines the recommendations arising from our facts, findings and conclusions.
- **Conclusion**
  - Provides an overall conclusion to the study.

Appendix III supplies the survey questionnaire, and interview guides relating to this evaluation.


## Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Ms. Nancy Pike, Coordinator of the Halifax City Employment Support Centre for her input during the conduct of the evaluation. We would also like to thank Ms. Yvonne Blanchard, Administrator of Community Development and Financial Services for the City of Halifax for her patience and cooperation in providing insights into the project. A special thank you is extended to the staff and participants who provided us with valuable information during interviews and the telephone survey.

## 2.
## BACKGROUND

### Mission Statement of Employability Resources Network (ERN)

The Employability Resources Network (ERN) was undertaken to identify and promote effective ways of helping employment disadvantaged persons return to active participation in the labour market.

### Objectives of ERN

The objectives of ERN are the following:

- To determine, through a comprehensive evaluation of a variety of initiatives, what approaches to enhancing the employability of disadvantaged workers, work best for whom.

- To demonstrate and test, using financial and technical assistance, approaches that are vital to enhancing the employability of disadvantaged workers.

- To develop and maintain a central information clearinghouse of employability enhancement techniques and materials. Contained in the clearinghouse are descriptions of Canadian and international projects and programs, contact people, evaluations and bibliographies.

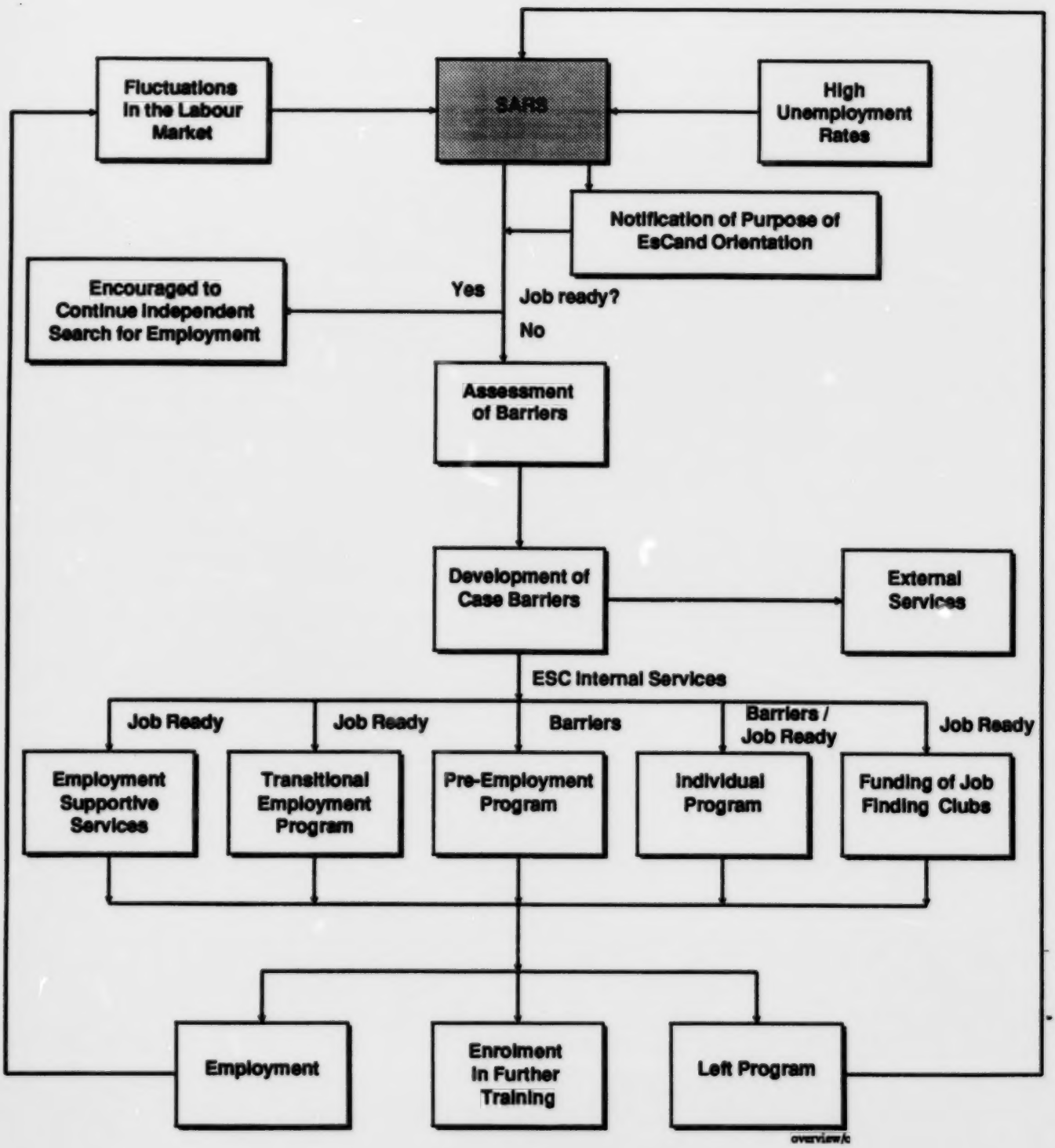
- To synthesize recent experience and recommend to the Minister of Employment and Immigration (funder) and other governments, effective approaches for enhancing the employability of disadvantaged workers.

### Benefits of ERN

ERN has been designed to provide a "return" in the form of information and assistance to key stakeholders. They include Employment and Immigration Canada, other labour market or social service departments, projects being evaluated and demonstration projects, as well as communities, groups and individuals working or interested in the training and human resource development areas.

- Projects being evaluated will benefit from the objective examination of their services and outcomes for participants. Where appropriate,

## Exhibit 2 — Overview of the Halifax City Employment Support Centre



suggestions for alternate approaches or changes will be made.

- Senior governments will receive a synthesis of findings from evaluations, literature review and contacts with the employment community that will help in policy formulation and program development.

- Interested parties will also have access to a national clearinghouse of information on employment projects, programs, contact persons, and evaluations that will help in preparing funding submissions and in improving the quality of their services.

- Selected demonstration projects will be assisted to test innovative approaches.

## Overview of Halifax City Employment Support Centre - Operations and Activities

The Employment Support Centre (ESC) is an outgrowth and expansion of the City of Halifax Social Planning Department's ongoing efforts to promote full employment and in particular to assist social assistance recipients make the transition to employment. The Social Planning Department has spearheaded research in this area and brought to the public's attention the need for developing policy that more adequately deals with the increasing numbers of employable and the working poor who are showing up on provincial and municipal social assistance caseloads. Exhibit 2, on the opposite page, provides a diagrammatic description of the project.

In the year prior to the Social Assistance Recipient (SARS) Agreement being signed with the Province, the Social Planning Department had operated, on a small scale, an employability project that was later to become the SARS Employment Support Centre. This initial project, funded by the City of Halifax, was staffed by two counsellors, one part-time administrative position and one clerical position. This project complemented other City run projects operating out of the same location including a literacy and upgrading program offered under HRDA as part of a work activity project, and a youth counselling project which is a CEIC outreach program.

When the SARS Agreement came onstream, the project was established as the Employment Support Centre and continued to operate out of the Alexander Centre. Staffing of the employability project was expanded to include one full-time co-ordinator, three counsellors, one assessment worker, and clerical position with provisions for the one contracting out of Job Finding Club functions. The second year of SARS funding brought the project's staffing up to its present complement of eight, with an additional assessment worker. In addition, that year, the Job Finding Club functions became internalized. Exhibit 2, on the opposite page, provides a diagrammatic overview of the project.

The original target population of the Employment Support Centre included all individuals who had been on the social assistance caseload for a three month period and who were classified as able bodied unemployed (ABU). Over the project's first year, however, ESC staff realized that the ABU classification was misleading and required analysis and modification to more accurately identify potential ESC clients. Included in the general ABU classification, for example, were individuals who were on the caseload due to fluctuations in the labour market. As the economy strengthened, these individuals would leave the rolls; as the economy stagnated, the rolls would again increase. In addition, ESC staff determined that a large number of cases formerly classified as ABU were, in fact, non-able bodied due to a mental or physical disability.

This realization lead to the development of a four tier coding system that would identify individuals as: (1) job ready; (2) individuals with employment barriers but suitable for ESC services; (3) individuals with short-term problems (in crisis situations and as such not suitable for ESC services); and (4) individuals with long-term problems (such as a mental health disability and again not suitable for ESC services). By the project's second year, this coding process was in place with the ESC receiving referrals from the first two coding classifications: the job ready and individuals with 'fixable' employment barriers.

Clients are referred to the ESC through two streams. Under the first stream, job ready clients, when first applying for assistance, are referred by the case worker to the ESC where an appointment is made for an initial employability assessment. The assessment process results in the client either confirmed as job ready or identified as having certain employment barriers. In the former case, the client is encouraged to continue his search for employment independent of the ESC or is referred to the Employment Supportive Services program of the ESC where assistance is offered with resume writing and interviewing skills can be sharpened. ESC staff attempt to restrict services to the minimum, to the job ready, so as not to develop dependence among that group as well as to free up ESC time and resources for clients with identifiable employment barriers.

In the second instance, where the client has been identified as having employment barriers, a more thorough assessment is done and the client is then referred to an employment counsellor. The counsellor and client jointly develop a case plan based on the assessment and discuss further barriers that may be identified in this second meeting (vocational, physical or psychological). The client is then referred to the appropriate ESC services or external specialty service.

Under the second stream, a computer listing is produced for the ESC on an ongoing basis of all individuals receiving social assistance for a 3 month period.

This list is then sent to the social assistance workers for verification that the individuals are coded correctly as job ready or employable with some barriers. Once verified, a letter is sent out to clients by ESC staff explaining the purpose of the ESC and notifying them of a group meeting which they are expected to attend for orientation purposes and registration in the program. Able bodied individuals who fail to attend this meeting are sent a second letter advising of a second meeting. Should they fail to attend this second meeting, their social assistance worker is notified who, in turn, contacts them to determine the reason for their absence. If the individual is classified as able bodied and employable they are expected to participate in the program or demonstrate that they are actively seeking employment.

During these group sessions, appointments are set up with ESC staff for individual client assessments that will initially determine whether the client is job ready or in need of specific services available through the ESC. As in the first stream, a case plan follows the assessment process.

## Services

There are five service areas available to clients through the ESC: the Transitional Employment Program, the Pre-Employment Program, Employment Supportive Services, the Individual Program and Job Finding Clubs. One of the services available to clients through the ESC is the **Transitional Employment Program**. Essentially, this program is used to provide the job ready client with their first real job experience. Suitable clients are considered job ready in terms of their personal life and only need on-the-job exposure to enable them to become actively involved and prepared for the labour market. The client is placed in a job in the private sector for a period of up to 6 months, with the average placement being 4.5 months. Placements are chosen that have the potential for hiring the client or that can provide training in transferable skills.

Client wages are paid through the program at $5.00 an hour. The program is similar to CEIC's Individual Subsidized Jobs Program (ISJ) but simplifies the process for the employer by the ESC taking responsibility for all administrative and financial aspects of the program.

In the ESC's first year, the operation of this program experienced some difficulties as the assessment tool had not been sufficiently developed to adequately identify the appropriate target group - i.e., the job ready. As a result, some individuals who have been referred by field staff as job ready, in fact, when put through the program, were identified as having barriers to employment such as mental disabilities or substance abuse problems.

By the ESC's second year the coding problem was resolved and appropriate referrals were being made to this program. In addition, the second year

saw a range of wages being introduced (from $5.00 to $7.00 an hour) in order to permit more flexibility by way of job responsibility, with some employers choosing to top these wages in certain instances. Also, in the second year, the ESC agreed to pursue the ISJ route (due to shortage of SARS monies) in those instances where a client required additional on-the-job training and where the employer was willing to undertake the administrative requirements to obtain CEIC funding. ESC staff would prefer however to retain responsibility for the administration to ensure client training needs are met.

The **Pre-Employment Program** is geared for the client who has some employment barriers (literacy, mental health, addictions, fitness) as identified through the assessment process. Under this program the client receives counselling or a service appropriate to their barrier(s) as required and is also placed with a community agency for on-the-job training. Wages are paid through the ESC at $4.50 an hour up to a 40 hour week. A client is typically in this program for 6 to 12 months before satisfactorily overcoming their employment barriers. ESC staff have found this program to be the most flexible in meeting the needs of the majority of their clients.

At the end of their involvement with this program, many clients enrol in a program geared at specific job training (clerical, trades training) available through vocational schools, continuing education or private training institutes. Others become involved in a Job Finding Club available through the ESC or to the Transitional Program. This extra time with the ESC provides the additional counselling that may be required to ensure a client's successful entry into employment.

The job ready client has the option of making use of the services available through the **Employment Supportive Services** program. This program provides assistance with resume writing, practice in interviewing skills, assistance with using the CEIC job posting boards, and advice on contacting employers. This program also provides clients with an office environment in which they can make their employment-related phone calls and make use of typewriters.

A fourth service offered through the ESC is the **Individual Program** that permits the direct purchase of a specific service or short-term training on an individual client basis. Examples are typewriter rentals, purchase of textbooks, registration for assertiveness training courses, enrolment fee for fitness classes. This service has been found by staff to be a useful avenue for making the client more job ready.

The funding of **Job Finding Clubs** is the final service offered directly through the ESC. Originally contracted out to individuals skilled in the organization of these clubs, the ESC now has one staff person responsible for co-ordinating 12 Clubs a year. These Clubs are open to referrals from other training projects as well as ESC clients and offer an environment in which peers and staff

provide, on a daily basis, support and advice to each other to both obtain and maintain employment.

In addition to these formalized programs, the ESC can make specialized services available to their clients on an as required basis. These may include psychological, physical or vocational counselling.

Between January 1989 and March 1990, approximately 649 clients have gone through the Employment Support Centre with 36% finding employment and an additional 4% enroled in further training or academic upgrading. An additional 31% are still involved in some aspect of the ESC while the remaining 29% have left the program for a variety of reasons including poor health, substance abuse, being misassessed or having quit.

It is important to note that the ESC has a "fixed" client base - potentially all social assistance recipients who are job ready or have "fixable" employment barriers. Unlike other projects evaluated by ERN, the ESC cannot "select" who will or will not receive services to the extent that other projects may, and therefore it is not surprising that only 20-25% of the ESC's clients are job ready. Indeed, the ESC refers a number of its job ready clients to another Halifax employability enhancement project evaluated by ERN - the Sobey's Training Project. These factors are important considerations when interpreting the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this evaluation.

Finally, the 1989/90 budget for the ESC is $500,000.

# 3.
# STUDY DESIGN

The study design consisted of a number of data collection methodologies:

- telephone survey of participants;
- information collected by program staff at intake;
- two focus groups held with 8 and 6 clients respectively; and
- interviews conducted with two assessment counsellors, three employment counsellors, the ESC coordinator and the social assistance director.

## Methodological Considerations

When reviewing this report, it is important that the reader bear in mind that the survey sample is small in size (n=76) and was not randomly selected. Therefore, the findings cannot be said to be representative of the ESC population. Caution is also warranted when interpreting financial data since this information is subject to recall errors due to its self-reported nature.

With this in mind, as evaluators we attempted to present a balanced report of the study results and program data, supplemented with the more qualitative outcomes from staff and participant interviews and the participant focus group. In so doing, we reported general patterns that emerged from the qualitative methods.

## Participant Survey and Program Data

The issues were not directly addressed by data collected by Halifax City ESC project management. Consequently, a primary methodology for this evaluation was a telephone survey of all participants.

All participants involved with the ESC since January 1989 were eligible for interviews. A total of 649 clients have been involved with the ESC since that date to the time of the survey.

When conducting the survey, telephone numbers were not available for all of the 649 participants as many Social Assistance clients do not have telephones. Quotas for completed interviews were established and all participants were contacted. A total of 76 respondents consented to a telephone interview. The interviewers were instructed to call back at least five times

telephone numbers that were no longer correct or available. As noted above, this resulted in a sample that was not randomly selected, and therefore it cannot be said to be representative of ESC's client population.

Information collected by project management (n=450 clients) was provided to the evaluators and enabled a "match" for 65 of the 76 telephone survey respondents. This information was useful in identifying the employability score (e.g. job ready) each participant was given upon assessment, and in establishing a "portrait" of the client's employment history.

## Focus Groups and In-Person Interviews

In order to obtain insight into the impact of the training project on the individual trainees' quality of life, two focus groups were conducted with eight and six participants respectively. In addition, interviews were conducted with project management and agency officials to get their perspective on the project's strengths and weaknesses.

## Measuring Project Success

There are two key indicators used to measure the performance of the ESC. The first is the number of participants who are employed or enroled in further training upon completion of the project. The second is the number of clients who have successfully worked on barriers to employment which, once removed, may eventually lead them to employment. These indicators were developed during the course of the assessment. Since not all clients are job ready at entry into or exit from ESC, employment is not the only indicator of success. The number of participants enroled in additional training and the number of clients who have successfully worked on barriers to employment are appropriate indicators for clients who require pre-employment training. We accepted these indicators as appropriate measures for the evaluation.

In fact, their 1989-1990 proposal states "Our objective is to work with the employable people who are able to become actively involved either employment or training." As such, we examined both indicators during our evaluation. The primary focus, admittedly, was on the number of participants employed as a measure of success, as it was with most ERN evaluations.

Recognizing that staff estimate that only 20 to 25% of ESC clients are job ready, we interpreted the survey results with the pursuit of training viewed as a second measure of success. The telephone survey did not directly address this indicator, but program data was useful in evaluating this indicator.

# 4.
# FACTS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

## Findings and Conclusions

This section presents our findings and conclusions with respect to each of the six evaluation issues.

### ISSUE 1

**Did the Employment Support Centre assist participants in:**

- **obtaining employment?**
- **maintaining employment?**

#### Conclusion

The Halifax City ESC project has had success in assisting participants to obtain employment, particularly when one considers the nature of its clients (80% have employment barriers). Sixty-six (66%) percent of participants were employed at the time of the survey, and 68% of these respondents did continue in their first job indicating that ESC assisted participants in maintaining employment. Completing the project gives an advantage to participants. Job finding clubs have been effective at the ESC. The ESC was successful in stabilizing the employment pattern of participants.

#### Issue Focus

This issue addresses the primary goal of all employability enhancement projects, that is whether a participant's employment potential is improved because of their involvement in the project. Although it is difficult to measure "employment potential", it is possible to assess whether a participant exhibits a better employment history after participation in the project. When considering this issue, it is necessary to consider what constitutes a "success" for a particular project.

In assessing this issue, we must first examine the premise upon which the ESC was originally based. The primary objective set for the ESC, as we have been told, is "to provide employment training resources to individuals on municipal social assistance or family benefits" with the intent that this training will lead to employment. This objective, however, assumes that the individuals with whom the ESC is to work are either ready immediately for employment or will be in the short-term. Over the 4 years that the ESC has been in existence, however, staff have found that this assumption is not valid and that, in fact, only few of their clients, perhaps 20-25%, can be classified as job ready.

ESC counsellors spoke of the increasing numbers of complicated cases they are seeing including clients with multiple barriers to employment; adults who were abused as children and whose lives are compounded, for example, by substance abuse. Further, recent figures collected with the assessment tool refined through use by ESC staff, suggest that higher than a third of the City's social assistance caseload are classified as having mental health problems.

The more realistic goal of the ESC, in staff's view therefore, is to meet their clients' real needs through individual counselling rather than immediately involving the client is some form of employment training. This counselling may require 6 months or longer; in fact some clients have been with the ESC for over a year. The impact of the ESC then is as much on quality of life as it is on employment. The ESC counsellors do a lot of referral work for their clients using the metro's areas strong resource base to meet their clients' personal needs (mental health services, substance abuse counselling, family counselling services). Once these needs are met or are being dealt with, then the client is able to concentrate on developing employment goals.

Recent proposals have included this change in program rationale which has been accepted by the funders. Success for ESC then, does not translate simply into the number of employed participants. Given the fact that so few ESC clients are job ready, another measure of success that could be applied was the number of participants enroled in further training. However, the program data and telephone survey did not provide measures with respect to this indicator.

## Findings

### How many participants subsequently found work?

All participants were recipients of social assistance prior to beginning the program. Results from the telephone survey indicate that the number of participants employed at the time of the survey was 36 (47%) of 76 respondents. In addition, another 14 respondents indicated that they had been employed at some time since the project. What this means is that 66% of ESC participants found work at some time after the project. In fact, according to program data, 71% of participants classified as job ready found employment after receiving services from the ESC, and 66% of those with barriers were employed at some point after the ESC.

Thirty-one (41%) respondents completed the program. Of these participants, 20 (65%) were employed at the time of the survey. Another 4 of these respondents indicated that they were employed at some time since the project. Seventy-seven percent (24 of 31) of participants who completed the project found employment as compared to 58% (26 of 45) who did not complete the project. In this case, completing the project gives

participants an advantage in obtaining employment. In particular, the ESC is helpful in assisting clients with barriers to find employment, 52% reported that they found their first job through a job referral as opposed to 33% of the ESC's job ready clients.

The job finding clubs, which are approximately 3 weeks in duration were particularly useful in assisting job ready clients to obtain employment. ESC clients who participated were unanimous in their assessment of the clubs. The success rate of these clubs is high. For two clubs, 83% (19) of participants found employment and three others were considering offers of employment.

Staff estimate that approximately one fifth to one third of their clients face multiple barriers to employment and would prefer more flexibility within the project to assist these clients. The nature of these clients is such that many require more intensive pre-employment training before they will be job ready, and some have limited future employment potential but their quality of life can be improved. The success rate of ESC is highlighted by the fact only one fifth to one quarter of ESC participants are job ready.

**How many successful participants maintained employment?**

An important finding is that since their involvement with the project, 68% (34) of respondents who were employed have continued in their first jobs and 20% (10) in their second job. Very few participants who were employed at some time after the program held three or more jobs (12.0%). Program data reveal that 83% of job ready clients held one position, and 70% of those with barriers remained at their first job.

Halifax City ESC is successful in helping participants to maintain employment. Since many participants are classified as job ready or face some barriers to employment, the success of the program in assisting participants maintain employment is linked to the level of work-related skills these participants develop or improve during the project.

**Is there a change in employment pattern for successful participants?**

Information was matched for 61 (80%) participants' employment history before the project from the project database. We compared pre-and post-project information to determine whether the employment pattern changed after participation in the program. There was no major change in participants' employment status (i.e. full-time, seasonal etc.) after the project.

As discussed above, the analysis did reveal that 68% (34) of these participants, who were employed at some time since the project, continued in their first job. ESC is successful in enabling participants to strengthen their employment pattern, at least in maintaining employment.

**Is the program success rate higher than in a comparable group?**

The ESC has a similar success rate to the Halifax County Employment Resource Centre (ERC) in enabling participants to find and maintain employment. The ESC's job finding clubs were more successful than the ERC's clubs. This is likely a result of more experience in running this type of club.

## ISSUE 2

**Did the Project end/reduce the participant's dependence on social assistance?**

### Conclusion

The project was successful in shifting participants' dependence for their main source of income from social assistance to wages, thereby reducing reliance on income assistance. Social assistance payments also dropped from $663.76 per month before the project to $537.51 after the project, for a difference of $126.25.

### Issue Focus

Another goal of employability enhancement projects is to enable participants to end their dependence on assistance. When we evaluated Halifax City ESC, we also examined whether participants shifted their dependence from one type of financial assistance (e.g. social assistance) to another (e.g. unemployment insurance).

### Findings

**Did participants receive less social assistance after the program than before?**

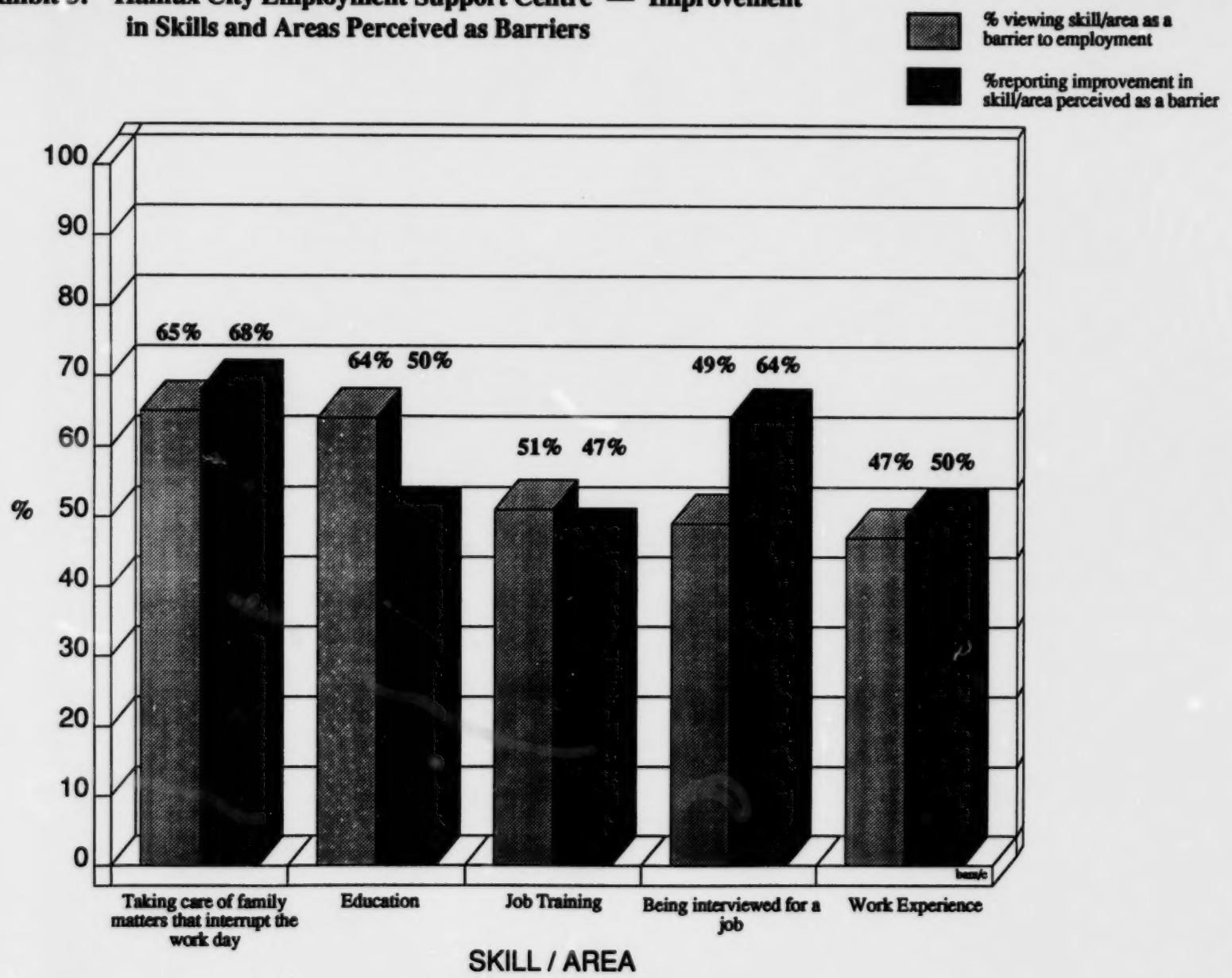
Information collected before intake provided information for 65 participants' circumstances prior to the project. In the six months before the project, the type of financial supplement reported was municipal social assistance (MSA) (75.8%), family benefits (7.6%), unemployment insurance (7.6%), wages (6.1%), and "other" (3.0%).

At the time of the survey, 43.4% (33) of respondents reported that their principal source of income was from wages, 40.8% (31) social assistance, and 10.5% (8) unemployment insurance.

The result is that a net total of 29 (33 vs. 4) participants relied on wages as their primary source of income. In addition, a net total of 19 (31 vs. 50) fewer participants were dependent on MSA as their main source of household income. In addition, social assistance payments decreased from a mean of $663.76 before the project to $537.51 after the project for a difference of $126.25. Dependence on social assistance did decrease after the project.

Caution is warranted when using any financial data that relies on a respondent's memory.

**Exhibit 3: Halifax City Employment Support Centre — Improvement in Skills and Areas Perceived as Barriers**



**Level of assistance received by comparable population?**

An average amount of social assistance received by a comparable population required a manual review of the files, for which resources were not available.

## ISSUE 3

**Did the Project strengthen the participant's sense of employment readiness?**

### Conclusion

The Halifax City ESC resulted in an improved sense of employment readiness for participants. For skills perceived as barriers to employment, the project was most successful in improving two specific skills: taking care of family matters that interrupt the work day; and being interviewed for a job.

### Issue Focus

Often, clients of employability enhancement projects have experienced a series of failures resulting in a negative self-image. ESC participants do face some barriers to employment, which must be addressed by the project before they are employable. By improving skills in these areas a participant's confidence in his/her employability is increased.

### Findings

**Do participants say they feel more ready for employment after completing the program?**

We addressed this issue by examining what areas were perceived as barriers to employment by participants and whether the project resulted in a perceived level of improvement for clients. We reasoned that improvement in areas perceived as barriers would result in an improved sense of employment readiness because of increased self-confidence in this area.

Our findings are outlined in Exhibit 3 on the opposite page. The bar chart presents the five main areas perceived as barriers to employment and the percentage of participants who felt that they improved in this area. The percentages are based on responses from participants to whom these services were offered.

Certain skills or aptitudes were perceived by more than 45% of the participants as barriers to employment. Almost fifty-percent or more of these respondents felt that the project was **helpful** in improving these skills or dispositions. In particular, 68% of respondents who perceived taking care of family matters that interrupt the work day as a barrier to employment felt that their skills had improved in this area. This is not surprising since 41% of the telephone survey respondents were single parents as opposed to 10% of the ESC's 1989

caseload. The five main areas identified by respondents as **barriers** to employment were:

- taking care of family matters that interrupt the work day (65%);
- education (64%);
- job training (51%);
- being interviewed for a job (49%); and
- work experience (47%).

Understanding what areas are perceived as barriers to clients is useful for evaluating current services offered to clients through the ESC and establishing whether any gaps exist. The end result is that the project is more responsive to client needs because program planning is based on perceived need.

## ISSUE 4

**Did the Employment Support Centre improve the participant's financial situation?**

### Conclusion

Involvement with the Employment Support Centre did not result in an improved financial situation for participants. Only 32 (44%) respondents reported that they were financially better off at the time of the survey than in the three months before the project. Mean annual income levels rose slightly from $9,817 to $9,920 after the project.

This finding is likely tied to a number of factors such as low wages, loss of benefits (e.g. medical / dental benefits) paid by social assistance and the costs associated with employment (e.g. day care). The pilot project that will provide single parents with financial incentives to make the move from social assistance is a very positive and important initiative.

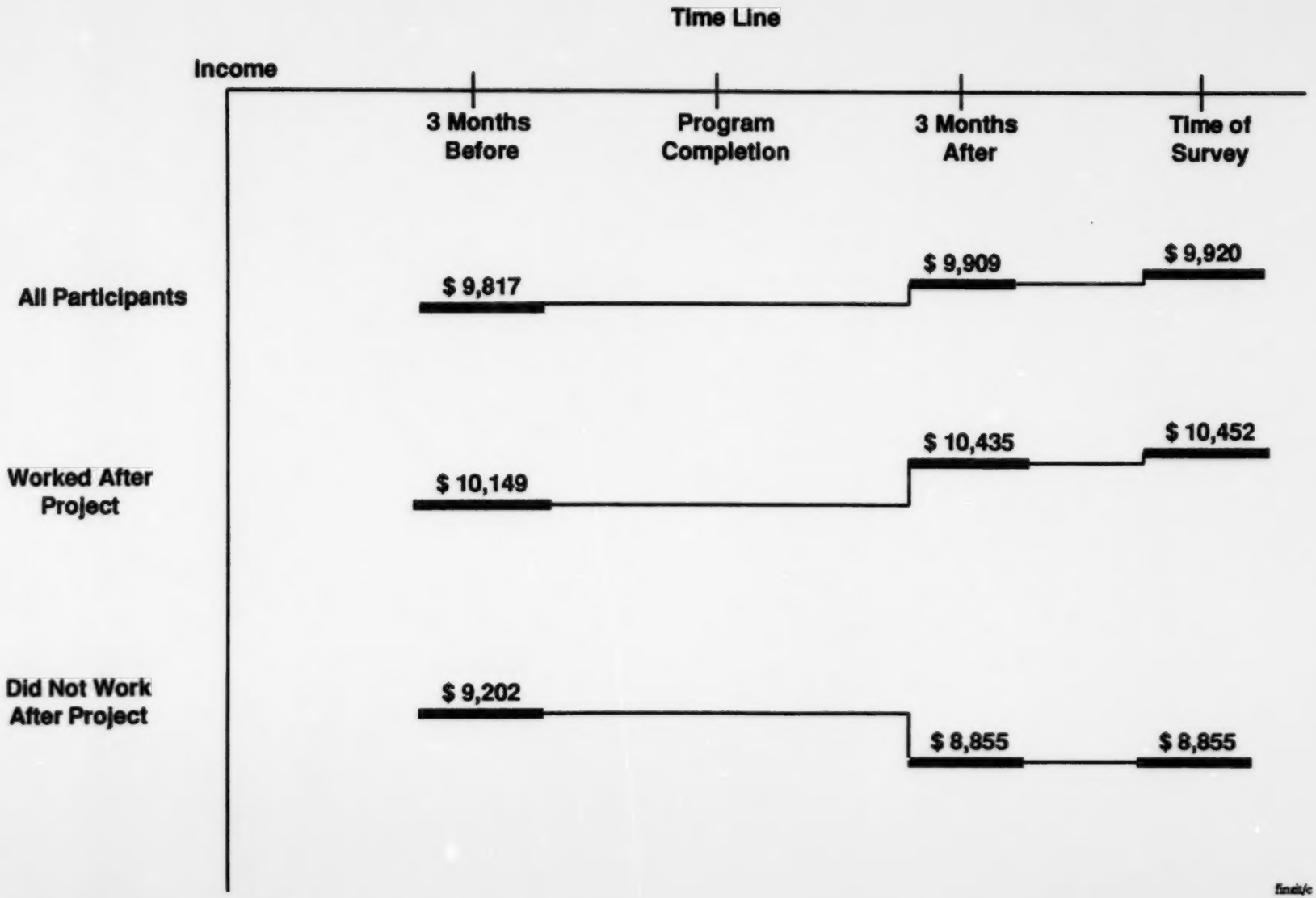
### Issue Focus

This issue addresses another important question and attempts to measure whether real improvements in income have resulted. Although a client may have found and held a job and reduced his/her dependence on social assistance, it is possible that his/her overall standard of living has decreased. Indirectly, this issue attempts to address the questions of quality of life and also attempts to assess whether employment may result in disincentives for clients. In particular, ESC staff have long identified sole support parents as experiencing disincentives to employment. They are currently negotiating a pilot run of a system with the Province that would provide single parents presently on family benefits with sufficient financial incentive to make the move from social assistance to employment.

### Findings

**Do participants report any change in income?**

**Exhibit 4: Changes in the Financial Situation for Employment Support Centre Participants**

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Using survey data, we examined income levels of project participants for three points in time:

- three months before the project;
- three months after the project (where applicable); and
- at the time of the survey.

Exhibit 4, on the opposite page, depicts the income levels reported for these three points in time. Income levels are based on available information and presented for all participants, for participants who were employed at some point in time after the project, and for those who did not work after the ESC. Once again, caution is warranted when examining data based on respondent memory since it is subject to recall errors.

An examination of the time line reveals that before the project, the mean annual income was $9,817. This figure rose slightly to $9,909 (a difference of $92) in the 3 months immediately after the project. However, at the time of the survey, the mean annual income rose to $9,920 for a difference of $103 from pre-project income levels.

These findings are in keeping with the fact that only 32 (44%) respondents reported that they felt they were financially better off **at the time of the survey than in the three months before** the project. This is not surprising since only about half of the respondents were employed at the time of the survey, and it is a known fact that there are financial disincentives to employment (e.g. loss of benefits, new costs).

We also examined the income levels of participants who worked, and did not work, after the project. For those participants who were employed at some time after the project, the mean annual income was $10,149 and rose slightly to $10,435 in the 3 months after the project. At the time of the survey, the mean level of income was $10,452 for a difference of $303 from pre-project income levels. Twenty-five (52%) of these participants felt that they were financially better off at the time of the survey than in the three months before. Thirty-one (62%) of the respondents reported wages as their primary source of household income.

In contrast, only 7 of the 26 respondents who did not work after the project reported that they were financially better off at the time of the survey than before the project. Only two respondents reported wages as his/her primary source of income at the time of the survey. Income levels for this group dropped from a mean of $9,202 to $8,855 at the time of the survey.

These findings indicate that the ESC had little impact on the financial situation of participants, although those who found employment were somewhat better off than those who did not.

The question raised by these findings is that initially, at least, employment may result in a disincentive for participants due to costs such as transportation and

day care. Often benefits (e.g. prescription drugs paid for) are terminated when employment begins. A transitional period may ease the financial burdens faced in the short-term by social assistance recipients who move to employment and the proposed pilot project to assist single parents is a good step in the right direction.

## ISSUE 5

**What were the costs of the program compared to social assistance?**

### Conclusion

The per capita cost of the Employment Support Centre is $770.42. Reduced reliance on social assistance has resulted in a difference in monthly payments of $126.25. In the light of employment information available for participants, and the findings discussed for other issues we conclude that the savings are due to the improved employment of participants after the project.

### Issue Focus

This issue is of central importance to program funders and administrators but is frequently overlooked during the planning process. In times of fiscal restraint it is those projects that can show a positive cost-benefit ratio that will have a competitive edge in applying for funding. Accordingly, when evaluating the ESC this issue was included for analysis.

The detailed calculations for this section are included in Appendix IV.

**What is the total cost per participant of the Employment Support Centre?**

The cost per participant was calculated to be $770.42. To arrive at this figure, we divided the number of clients who passed through the project (n=649) into the 1989/90 budget. This figure includes all project costs. The per capita cost is low and caution is merited when making comparisons between this and other projects.

**What is the cost of social assistance for each participant?**

We relied on survey data to answer this question. Although self-reported data which requires recall of detailed information over a long period of time is not entirely reliable, this information was used in the absence of any data from Social Services used in other ERN evaluations. The information was available but required a manual search of files which was beyond the scope of this project.

Since Sobeys participants are all recipients of social assistance, in principle all 76 respondents should have reported that they were on social assistance in the six month period before the Training Project. ERN evaluators decided, based on interviews with program staff to rely on the fact that all participants were social assistance recipients. All calculations were made with the assumption that all 76 respondents

received income assistance payments before the project.

We found that the amount of social assistance reported received by participants declined after participation in the ESC. The mean amount of social assistance reported received decreased from $663.76 per participant per month to $537.51 per month afterwards, for a difference of $126.25 per month.

**What was the cost of the program?**

We estimated the amount of time to recoup the cost of a single participant's session in terms of social assistance savings. The difference was $126.25 per month. The expected time to recoup the cost of the ESC in terms of social assistance savings was 6.1 months. Obviously, very little time is required to recoup the per capita cost of a single client's participation. This model warrants attention by funders and a more detailed cost benefit analysis.

## ISSUE 6

**What interventions contribute most to increasing employability?**

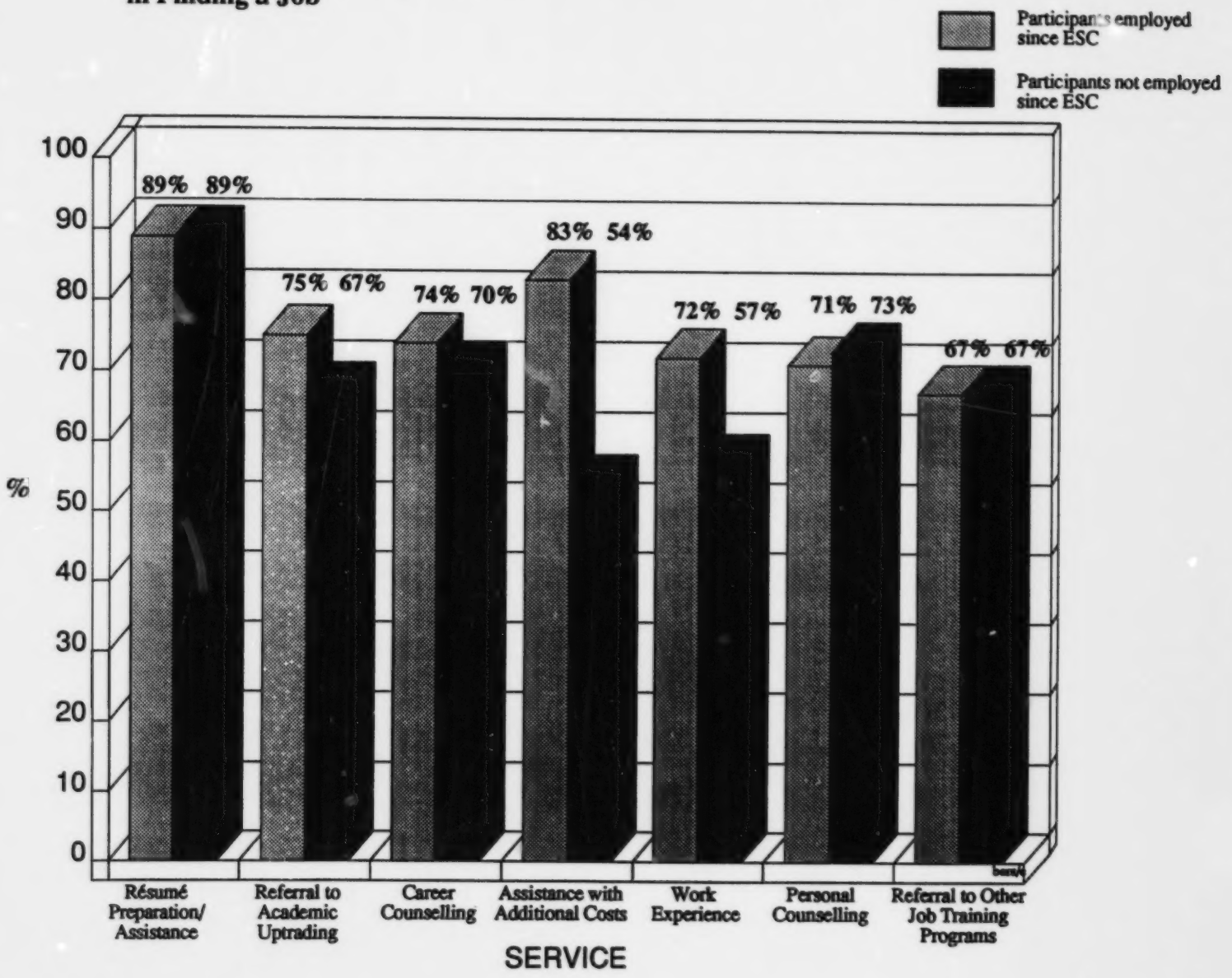
### Conclusion

The two services perceived as most helpful in contributing to employability are résumé preparation assistance and career counselling. Work placements, negotiating work placements and job finding clubs were perceived as helpful by the smallest percentage of respondents, likely an artifact of the number of participants who participated and not a reflection on their usefulness. In fact, job finding club participants who were interviewed were unanimous in reporting that job finding clubs played a critical role in obtaining employment. As well, job placements through the transitional programs were perceived as valuable by clients.

### Issue Focus

This issue is of vital importance, not only for ESC project management, but for other individuals planning similar projects and for agencies providing funding. We wanted to identify interventions which are the most effective. This type of information is necessary if ESC will continue to improve and meet the needs of their clients while maximizing utilization of its financial and human resources.

**Exhibit 5: Halifax City Employment Support Centre — Services Helpful in Finding a Job**



## Findings

**What elements of the project training skills do you use in your job?**

Since participants receive training in a range of areas and services are offered on an individual basis this question was not addressed by the data.

**What skills were helpful in finding a job?**

In order to answer this question, respondents were divided into two groups: respondents who were employed at the time of the survey or who had been employed at some time since the project; and those who had never been employed since the project. Exhibit 5, on the opposite page, outlines the five main services offered by Halifax City ESC perceived as most helpful in finding a job. The percentages reflect the responses of participants to whom the service was made available.

For most services, at least half the respondents viewed the services as somewhat or very helpful in finding a job. There is not much variation in perception between the two groups. Participants who had been employed at some time after the project had slightly more positive ratings for particular aspects of the project.

For those respondents who had found employment, three services were reported as especially helpful in finding a job: resume preparation assistance (89%); referral to academic upgrading (75%) and career counselling (74%). For respondents who were given assistance with additional costs, 83% reported that the service was helpful in finding a job.

Respondents who had not been employed since the project reported that resume preparation assistance (89%); personal counselling (73%); and career counselling (70%) were helpful. In addition, 67% reported that referral to other training programs and academic upgrading were helpful to them. Finally, 64% found referrals to other agencies a helpful service.

We also examined the perceptions of sole support parents, men and women to determine if the project had varying impacts on each of these groups. Forty-one percent of participants were sole support parents, and half the participants were females. None of these groups differed in their perceptions of barriers to employment, nor was there much variation in areas of improvement. What did differ, was that males gave slightly less positive ratings than females in rating areas of improvement, and that as a group sole support parents gave slightly higher ratings.

Given the high unemployment rate in Halifax, many male ESC participants are likely job ready males. Certainly, this is simply a hypothesis based on our interpretation of the effects of the weak economy in the Maritime provinces. Interestingly, male participants rate most positively those areas that have the most

bearing on finding employment such as writing a resume, job training etc.. Female participants gave more positive ratings to all areas.

We also examined which services were perceived by job ready clients and those with barriers as helping them become more employable. Job ready clients listed résumé writing (100%), job finding clubs (83%), and career counselling (80%) most helpful. In contrast, participants with barriers found the following services most helpful: résumé writing (86%), personal counselling (78%), work experience (75%), referral to academic services (74%), and career counselling (72%).

It seems that there is a clear preference on the part of the job ready clients for services aimed directly at helping them obtain employment. On the other hand, clients with employment barriers had more pre-employment skills needs (e.g. personal counselling, work experience) in addition to job search skills.

What this means is that different clients (e.g. job ready clients vs. those with barriers) are looking for different benefits from the ESC project and have different needs. City ESC was helpful in strengthening the sense of employability of all participants, particularly females and sole support parents. It is difficult to generalize these findings to all ESC clients because the sample was not randomly selected.

**Which experiences/training were less useful?**

As discussed above, most services were perceived as helpful by both groups. However, for the respondents who had not found employment since the project three services in particular were viewed as less helpful than by those who had found jobs. These services were assistance with additional costs; work experience; and negotiating a work placement. Job finding clubs, work placements and negotiating work placements were rated as helpful by the smallest percentage of participants who found jobs. The job finding clubs were extremely successful, however, and these findings may simply relate to the smaller numbers of individuals who were job ready and received these services. Indeed, the job experience through the transitional program was considered valuable by clients.

## Qualitative Findings

This section outlines our findings and conclusions as a result of interviews and focus groups conducted as part of the conclusion.

## Strengths of the Employment Support Centre

The Employment Support Centre (ESC) offers the Halifax City Social Planning Department a workable option in dealing with the increasing numbers of social

assistance clients. Through a consistent application of the assessment tool, the City has, for the first time, a detailed profile of the social assistance caseload. The availability of this data can serve as the base for program development and planning that is client based or driven.

The strengths of the Employment Support Centre from the clients' perspective varies by client and by service received through the ESC. One thread common to clients' assessment of the various services, however, is the concern, emotional support and time provided the clients by the ESC counsellors. In the lives of individuals who face trauma on a daily basis, this cannot be underrated. In the words of one client, a 50 year old artist with a history of mental illness: "The counselling is helping me get over an extremely dysfunctional lifestyle. I'm alone in the world and I deal with a lot of anxiety and stress. I feel a little safer knowing the ESC is there. I feel grateful that I live in a society where there is something I can turn to." This individual is now working through the ESC's **pre-employment program** in a senior citizens complex.

Clients of the ESC's **transitional program** found the first-time job experience particularly valuable. As one client stated: "I had the education (secretarial) but no actual work experience; the transitional program was very encouraging and gave me the opportunity to try out my training." In addition, this program provided many clients with the confidence that they could, in fact, meet the job responsibilities; this was of particular benefit to the older client who had been out of the workforce for a number of years and who was now in the process of re-entry.

ESC clients who used the Job Finding Clubs were unanimous in their assessment of the Clubs as playing a critical role in their finding employment. Key strengths of this service from their perspective were assistance with resume preparation, the moral support provided by other members in the Club, role paying interview situations, and job search techniques. For clients in their 40's and 50's who had never used a resume in their earlier employment, this service was especially important. As well, the training in resume preparation was helpful for clients with a weak educational background. The ratio of success of the ESC run Job Finding Clubs is high; 10 of 11 clients of one Club found employment and 9 of 12 of a second found employment (the remaining three clients of this second Club had a number of employment offers and were in the process of deciding which to accept at the time these interviews were held).

The **Job Search Office** made available for the job ready client has been well used. Its strength is the availability of a well equipped base (complete with telephone and access to typewriter and secretary) from which a client can undertake their job search. Over and above the physical attributes of the service, clients report the significance of

the moral support available from staff at this office. In one client's words: "Looking for work can be really discouraging. I was looking for 7 to 8 months back in St. John's. Then I came to Halifax and was referred to the Sackville Street ESC office as a condition of social assistance. It was a good home base to start with; it put me in a positive frame of mind. Every morning I wanted to get into the office - it seemed like an office - and got started on my job search. Within two weeks I got a job - a good job."

Clients also indicated that they see an important indirect benefit of the program as enabling parents to set a good role model for their children. In one parent's words: "Through the ESC, I now have a reason to get up every morning; and when you raise children, this is setting an example - you show them this is what you do in life and this is how it is done."

## Areas for Improvement

Over the four years that the ESC has been operating, communication between the ESC and the social assistance division has improved. Some difficulties remain however, in that ESC staff feel a certain pressure to move clients off the caseload into employment before, in their assessment, the clients are ready to handle the responsibilities associated with employment. This problem can be attributed, in part, to the lack of day-to-day contact between the ESC and social assistance staff. Unlike the Employment Resource Centre in Halifax County where the two are located in the same building and in fact work on a team basis, the two functions in Halifax City are quite separate. Line staff are in separate geographical locations. However, every 4 to 6 weeks ESC meetings are held with the administration and field staff in an effort to improve communications between the two services. Individual ESC staff have attempted to meet this problem by taking time to go out to the social assistance offices and talking with the workers. They report that this is helpful in obtaining the worker's support in allowing an individual to stay on assistance longer than the usual 6 month period. In addition, ESC staff attend MSA staff meetings every 6 to 8 weeks. This extra time is necessary, in some cases, to enable an individual to enter a rehabilitation program, literacy training program, and so on.

Although ESC staff have found a way to "stretch" the 6 month guideline for participation, the reality is that a longer time than 6 months is sometimes needed to identify and address the problems of clients. Staff have found that a client who enters the pre-employment program, (it runs for a 6 month period) for example, often do not feel comfortable enough until the end of their placement period to divulge the true nature of their difficulties which may be related to sexual abuse or substance abuse. At this point they exit the program and may in fact be worse off emotionally than before their involvement in the ESC. Staff would like to see the pre-employment

**Exhibit 6: Evaluation Issues and Conclusions**

| | Issues | Conclusions Suggested by the Evaluation |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Did the Program assist the participants in obtaining employment; or maintaining employment? | Yes. The project was successful in assisting participants to find employment, (66% after receiving ESC services). 68% continued in their first job. |
| 2. | Did the Program end or reduce social assistance? | Yes. The project reduced dependence on social assistance. Monthly social assistance payments dropped form $663.76 to $537.51 after the project for a difference of $126.25. |
| 3. | Did the Program strengthen the participants' personal sense of employment readiness? | Yes. |
| 4. | Did the Program improve the participants' financial situation? | No. Slightly less than half (44%) of all participants felt that they were financially better off after the project. Mean annual income rose only slightly from $9,817 to $9,920 after the project. |
| 5. | What were the costs of the Program compared to social assistance? | The per capita cost of the project was $770.42. It is estimated that social assistance savings will recoup the cost of an ESC session within 6.1 months. |
| 6. | What interventions contributed most to increasing employability? | The two services perceived as most helpful were résumé preparation assistance and career counselling. |

program extended to one year to provide clients with a sufficient timeframe to address their problems. One ESC staff who has been with the City's Social Planning Department for 15 years commented that she sees the same clients over and over. She attributes this cycle to the lack of appropriate training programs and asks: "Can you really turn someone around in 6 months who is not very good in English and not very good in math?"

A second weakness identified by staff relates to wage rates and participant expectations. Staff believe the ESC should be able to assist clients build stability in their lives. Yet the majority of jobs available to ESC clients pay minimum wage ($4.50 an hour) which does not offer a realistic alternative to social assistance. When transportation, daycare costs, and clothing are taken into consideration, employment becomes the least attractive option. This results in clients leaving jobs because they do not have the money to buy the clothes, for example, that an office job demands.

The ESC has gone some distance in dealing with this problem by raising the wage rates in their transitional programs to $7.00 an hour. Another approach would be to assist clients access training that will provide a strong financial return to the client. Staff see a role for the ESC to identify labour shortages in the market and to design programs around these shortages. An example would be the region's present nursing shortage. Until a pro-active approach to identifying employment opportunities is taken, staff have little alternative but to place clients in short-term training programs such as secretarial and clerical training. These programs however, cannot compete with the training provided through the universities' two year secretarial programs with the result that the top paying jobs are closed to the ESC graduates.

## Summary of Observations

The following highlights our observations as a result of the preceding discussion of quantitative and qualitative findings. Exhibit 6, on the opposite page, summarizes our conclusions with respect to each of the six evaluation issues.

1. The Halifax City ESC project was successful in assisting participants to obtain employment. 66% found employment after the project. The project did assist participants maintain employment (68% remained in their first job). Completing the project gives an advantage to participants. Job finding clubs have been effective at the ESC.

   The ESC was successful in stabilizing the employment pattern of participants.

2. The project was successful in reducing participants' dependence on social assistance. Social assistance payments dropped from $663.76 before the project to $537.51 after the project for a difference of $125.25.

3. The Halifax City ESC resulted in an improved sense of employment readiness for participants. For skills perceived as barriers to employment, the project was most successful in improving two specific skills: taking care of family matters that interrupt the work day; and being interviewed for a job.

4. Mean annual income rose only slightly from $9,817 before the project to $9,920 after the project. Overall, slightly less than half (44%) of all participants felt that they were better off financially after the project than before the project began. This is likely related to a number of factors including low wages, loss of benefits (e.g. medical / dental benefits) paid by social assistance, and the costs associated with employment (e.g. day care).

5. The two services perceived as most helpful in contributing to employability are resume preparation assistance and career counselling.

6. A common thread related to the ESC's success based on clients' assessments of the various ESC services, is the concern emotional support and time provided by ESC counsellors.

7. The job experience provided through the transitional program and job finding clubs were viewed as particularly valuable by clients. The Job Search Office has been well used by clients.

8. Communication between the ESC and the social assistance division has improved over the four years that the ESC has been operating. However, ESC staff feel pressured to move clients off the caseload into employment before, in their assessment, clients are able to handle the responsibilities associated with employment.

9. ESC staff have found the 6 month guideline for participation to be inadequate to identify and address the problems of clients. They would like to see the pre-employment program extended to one year.

10. The majority of jobs available to ESC clients pay minimum wage ($4.50 per hour) which does not offer a realistic alternative to social assistance. The result is that there is a constant return of clients to the project. This cycle has been attributed to the lack of appropriate training programs. Until a pro-active approach to identifying employment opportunities is taken, staff have little alternative but to place clients in short-term training programs.

## 5.
## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are intended as suggestions for enhancing the Employment Support Centre. We recognize that some of these recommendations are beyond the control of project management. However, we recommend that some or all of these recommendations in future funding proposals.

1. A related recommendation is the expansion of the Pre-Employment Program, and in certain instances (i.e., client need for longer period of involvement) the Transitional Program, from its present six months to one year. (N.B. The program was expanded in the 1990/91 submission)

2. We recommend that the ESC continue to target their services to the different levels of "job readiness" - of clients Pre-Employment, Transitional, Job Finding Clubs, and Job Search Office. In addition, the one on one counselling should continue to be offered to the ESC client.

3. We recommend that the ESC continue to monitor the effectiveness of the screening process and make modifications to the process and services offered as required.

# 6.
# CONCLUSION

The ESC offers the Halifax City Social Planning Department a workable option for dealing with the increasing numbers of social assistance clients. Through a consistent application of the assessment tool the City has, for the first time, a detailed profile of the social assistance caseload. Availability of this data can serve as the base for program development and planning that is client driven.

The ESC has done a good job in identifying their clients' needs and providing them with an appropriate service(s) or counselling. The project has had limited success in assisting participants to find employment. This evaluation found that since few clients are job ready and up to a third do not complete the program, that a screening process would enhance the ESC's effectiveness by selecting candidates with more potential for success and making appropriate referrals out for other applicants.

However, this evaluation underlines the need for close cooperation between project staff and social assistance workers. The ESC project is successful, but its effectiveness could be further enhanced through the development of a formalized team approach to dealing with clients needs.

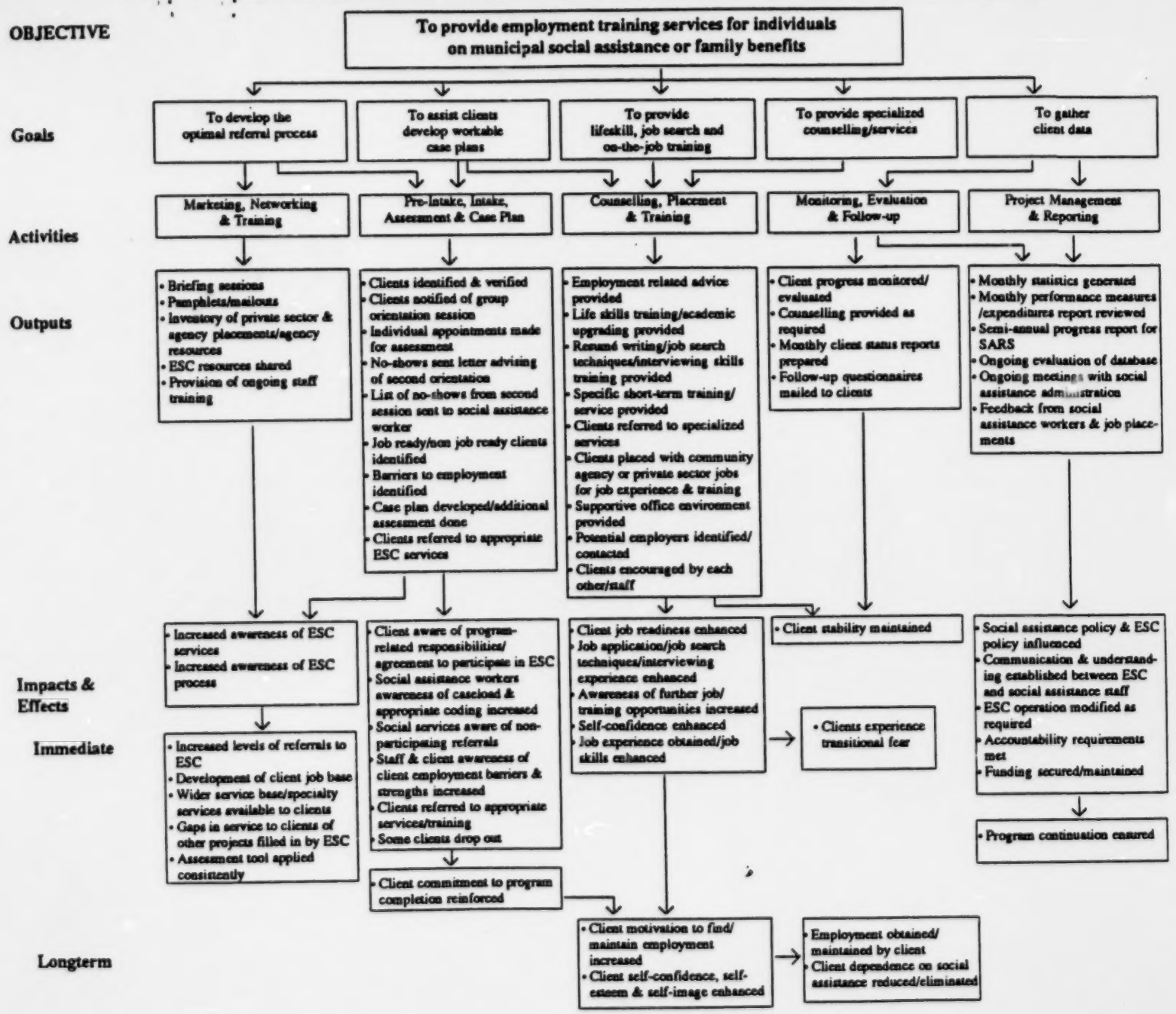
It is significant that more than half of respondents to the survey perceived themselves to be worse off financially since their involvement with the ESC even though they are employed. This is because the employment opportunities available to the majority of participants are low paying. There are two solutions for turning this problem around: the first is to obtain more private sector involvement in the establishment of training projects that meet identified labour shortages; and the second is to offer training programs that are longer in duration and geared to making the client competitive in the marketplace.

The Employment Support Centre provides a model of the effective use of research and project data for planning purposes. Emphasis on research is often overlooked but as this project demonstrates, should be incorporated into all employability enhancement projects because it is a key factor contributing to project success.

**APPENDIX I**

## LOGIC MODEL

# EXHIBIT I: HALIFAX CITY EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT CENTRE — PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL


OBJECTIVE
To provide employment training services for individuals on municipal social assistance or family benefits
Goals
To develop the optimal referral process
To assist clients develop workable case plans
To provide lifeskill, job search and on-the-job training
To provide specialized counselling/services
To gather client data
Activities
Marketing, Networking & Training
Pre-Intake, Intake, Assessment & Case Plan
Counselling, Placement & Training
Monitoring, Evaluation & Follow-up
Project Management & Reporting
Outputs
• Briefing sessions
• Pamphlets/mailouts
• Inventory of private sector & agency placements/agency resources
• ESC resources shared
• Provision of ongoing staff training
• Clients identified & verified
• Clients notified of group orientation session
• Individual appointments made for assessment
• No-shows sent letter advising of second orientation
• List of no-shows from second session sent to social assistance worker
• Job ready/non job ready clients identified
• Barriers to employment identified
• Case plan developed/additional assessment done
• Clients referred to appropriate ESC services
• Employment related advice provided
• Life skills training/academic upgrading provided
• Resume writing/job search techniques/interviewing skills training provided
• Specific short-term training/ service provided
• Clients referred to specialized services
• Clients placed with community agency or private sector jobs for job experience & training
• Supportive office environment provided
• Potential employers identified/ contacted
• Clients encouraged by each other/staff
• Client progress monitored/ evaluated
• Counselling provided as required
• Monthly client status reports prepared
• Follow-up questionnaires mailed to clients
• Monthly statistics generated
• Monthly performance measures /expenditures report reviewed
• Semi-annual progress report for SARS
• Ongoing evaluation of database
• Ongoing meetings with social assistance administration
• Feedback from social assistance workers & job placements
Impacts & Effects
Immediate
• Increased awareness of ESC services
• Increased awareness of ESC process
• Increased levels of referrals to ESC
• Development of client job base
• Wider service base/specialty services available to clients
• Gaps in service to clients of other projects filled in by ESC
• Assessment tool applied consistently
• Client aware of program-related responsibilities/ agreement to participate in ESC
• Social assistance workers awareness of caseload & appropriate coding increased
• Social services aware of non-participating referrals
• Staff & client awareness of client employment barriers & strengths increased
• Clients referred to appropriate services/training
• Some clients drop out
• Client commitment to program completion reinforced
• Client job readiness enhanced
• Job application/job search techniques/interviewing experience enhanced
• Awareness of further job/ training opportunities increased
• Self-confidence enhanced
• Job experience obtained/job skills enhanced
• Client stability maintained
• Clients experience transitional fear
• Social assistance policy & ESC policy influenced
• Communication & understanding established between ESC and social assistance staff
• ESC operation modified as required
• Accountability requirements met
• Funding secured/maintained
• Program continuation ensured
Longterm
• Client motivation to find/ maintain employment increased
• Client self-confidence, self-esteem & self-image enhanced
• Employment obtained/ maintained by client
• Client dependence on social assistance reduced/eliminated

## APPENDIX II

# METHODOLOGY OUTLINE

## EXHIBIT 2: METHODOLOGY OUTLINE
### City of Halifax
### Employment Support Centre

| IMPACT / EFFECT ISSUES | RESEARCH QUESTIONS | INDICATORS | AVAILABLE DATA / QUALITY | ADDITIONAL INSTRUMENTS REQUIRED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Did the Project assist the participants in:<br>– obtaining employment;<br>– maintaining employment? | R1. How many participants subsequently found work? | • Number of participants working 6 months after completing the program. | • Follow-up data. (H) | |
| | R2. How many successful participants maintained employment? | • Number of jobs held over six months. | | |
| | | • Proportion of the 6 months following the program during which participants were employed. | • Data not available. | • Survey of participants. |
| | R3. Is there a change in employment pattern for successful participants? | • % of six months spent working. | | |
| | | • Length of employment in the 6 months following the program compared to the 6 months preceding the program. | • Data not available. | • Survey of participants. |
| | R4. Is the program success rate higher than in a comparable group? | • Success rate by type of entrance. | • Follow-up data. (H) | • Survey of comparison group. |

## City of Halifax
## Employment Support Centre (cont'd)

| IMPACT / EFFECT ISSUES | RESEARCH QUESTIONS | INDICATORS | AVAILABLE DATA / QUALITY | ADDITIONAL INSTRUMENTS REQUIRED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. Did the Project end/reduce the participants' dependence on social assistance? | R5. Did participants receive less social assistance after the program than before? | • Amount of social assistance received in the 6 months before taking the program compared to the amount received in the 6 months after taking the program. | • Assessment form (for before program). (L) | • Survey of participants. |
| | | • Differences between successful and unsuccessful participants. | • Same as above. | • Interviews with staff. |
| | R6. Level of assistance received by comparable population? | • Assistance received. | • Data not available. | • Survey of comparison group. |
| 3. Did the Project strengthen the participants' personal sense of employment readiness? | R7. Do participants say they feel more ready for employment after completing the program? | • Individuals' perceptions regarding obtaining and keeping a job as a result of the program. | • Follow-up data. (L) | • Survey of participants. |
| 4. Did the Project improve the participants' financial situation? | R8. Do participants report any change in income? | • Participants' perceptions / actual financial status in the 6 months following the program. | • Review of the social assistance and family benefit files. (H) | • Survey of participants. |

## City of Halifax
## Employment Support Centre (cont'd)

| COST / BENEFIT ISSUES | RESEARCH QUESTIONS | INDICATORS | AVAILABLE DATA / QUALITY | ADDITIONAL INSTRUMENTS REQUIRED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. What were the costs of the program compared to social assistance. | R9. What is the total incremental cost per participant? | • Capitation + CD&E administration cost + Social Services administration cost.<br>• Cost per success = (per capita cost * number of participants) / number of successes. | • Data are available to determine cost per client. (H) | |
| | R10. What is the cost of social assistance for each participant? | • Average weekly cost per social assistance recipient in Nova Scotia. | • Provincial Community Services. (H) | |
| | R11. What is the cost of social assistance for each successful participant? | • Average weekly social assistance cost for successful participants in the 25 weeks following the program. | • City and Provincial Community Services. (H) | |
| | R12. Number of weeks required to recover the cost of a session from social assistance savings. | • (Per capita cost * average number of participants per session) / (Weekly social assistance savings per success * average number of successes per session). | • City and Provincial Community Services. (M) | |

## City of Halifax
## Employment Support Centre (cont'd)

| COST / BENEFIT ISSUES | RESEARCH QUESTIONS | INDICATORS | AVAILABLE DATA / QUALITY | ADDITIONAL INSTRUMENTS REQUIRED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. What interventions contribute most to increasing employability? | R13. What elements of the project training skills you learned do you use in your job? | • Perceptions of staff and participants. | • Data not available. | • Survey of participants.<br>• Interviews with staff.<br>• Focus group. |
| | R14. Which skills were helpful in finding a job? | • Same as above. | • Data not available. | • Same as above. |
| | R15. Which expenses / training were less useful? | • Same as above. | • Data not available. | • Same as above. |

# APPENDIX III

## TELEPHONE SURVEY, QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEW GUIDES

## APPENDIX III

## TELEPHONE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEW GUIDES

### GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

1. I'd like to start off this evening by going around the room and asking each of you to explain what you think the main purpose of the ESC is; and whether in your opinion it works.

2. Okay, now I'd like to say why you went to the ESC; what you were hoping would happen by going to the ESC; and what happened?

3. What services did each of you receive through the ESC? What do/did you think of these services?

4. Were you looking for other services that weren't available through the ESC? (If yes, what were they?)

5. How long have each of you been involved with the ESC? For those of you who are no longer part of the ESC, in your opinion was your involvement long enough? Is the training long enough?

6. Do you feel more employable (more in control of your life) since you have been involved with the ESC? Why? Why not?

7. What is the most important aspect about your involvement with the ESC? What have you gotten out of it?

8. Are there any other positive aspects of the ESC that we haven't touched on? Any negative aspects?

9. Is there anything that you would change in how the ESC operates in order to better meet people's needs?

10. Any other comments?

## INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ESC AND ERC STAFF

1. What do you see as the purpose of the ESC?

2. Do you see the ESC as offering a real alternative to social assistance recipients? Please explain.

3. Is it working?

4. Who, in your experience, is best suited to the services of the ESC?

5. What is the optimal method for identifying ESC participants?

6. Are the services offered by the ESC appropriate to the needs of the participants? Please explain.

7. Can you identify any additional services that should be offered?

8. What is the optimal relationship between the social assistance workers and the ESC staff and participants?

9. What is the existing relationship between the social assistance workers and the ESC staff and participants?

10. How critical is the assessment process to the eventual success of the participant's involvement in the ESC? Please explain.

11. How critical is the case plan to the eventual success of the participant's involvement in the ESC? Please explain.

12. What kind of ongoing support is provided to the ESC participant while involved in the program? Is this sufficient?

13. What kind of post-program support, if any, should be available to participants once they have left the ESC?

14. What are the three key strengths of the ESC? Please explain.

15. Does the ESC have any weaknesses? If so, can these be changed and how?

16. Do you have any other comments on the effectiveness of the ESC?

## APPENDIX IV

# PARTICIPANT TELEPHONE SURVEY

## HALIFAX PARTICIPANT TELEPHONE SURVEY

### Introduction

**ASK TO SPEAK TO PERSON NAMED ON LIST.**
**ONCE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT PERSON:**

Hello, my name is: _____ from the Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group and our firm is conducting a study for the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC). The purpose of our research is to help Employment and Immigration improve the training programs that it funds across the country. As a part of this study we are surveying the people who participated in:

**INTERVIEWER SHOULD STATE ONE PROGRAM AS INDICATED FROM THE SAMPLE LIST:**

- Halifax County Employment Resource Centre (ERC)
- Halifax City Employment Support Centre (ESC)
- Sobeys Project

We would now like to ask you some questions about your experience. All the information that you provide to us will be kept strictly confidential.

If respondent agrees to be interviewed — **GO TO A**
If respondent refuses to be interviewed — Can we arrange a time that's better for you?

Refusal

Date: _____

Time: _____

Telephone #:_____

## SECTION A: PRE-ERC/ESC/Sobeys/ESC EXPERIENCE

In this section, we would like to ask you some questions about what you were doing before you were involved with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys. 1 1 2 - 4

1. Approximately, when was the last time you had a job in Canada, before you became involved with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys?

From _____ _____ to _____ _____ -- --
Month Year Month Year -- 5 - 8

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Job never held | 2 | **SKIP TO Q5b.** |
| DK/NR | 9 | |

2. In this job were you employed: **(READ LIST, CIRCLE ONE)**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| full time | 1 | – 9 |
| part-time | 2 | |
| seasonal | 3 | |
| other (please specify) | 4 | |
| _____ | | |
| DK / NR | 9 | |

4. Why did this job end?

_____ -- --
_____ -- --
DK / NR 99 10 - 13

5. a. After this job had ended, did you look for any other jobs before you became involved with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1 | **SKIP TO Q6.** – 14 |
| No | 2 | **SKIP TO Q7.** |
| DK / NR | 9 | |

b. Before your involvement in the ERC/ESC/Sobeys, did you look for any jobs?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1 | |
| No | 2 | **SKIP TO Q7.** – 15 |
| DK / NR | 9 | |

6. What types of job(s) were you looking for?

_____ – –

_____ – –

_____ 16 - 19

7. The following is a list of factors that might help or create difficulties for people looking for work. For each factor, could you please tell me whether it was an advantage or disadvantage for you when looking for work. Please rate your answer on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being a "Major Disadvantage" 2 being "Somewhat of a disadvantage" 3 being a neutral rating, neither helpful nor a problem 4 being "Somewhat of an advantage" and 5 being a "Major Advantage".

| | Major Disad-vantage | Somewhat of a Disad-vantage | Neutral | Somewhat of an Ad-vantage | Major Advan-tage | DK/NR | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Your education | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 20 |
| Being interviewed for a job | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 21 |
| Writing a résumé | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 22 |
| Completing a job application | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 23 |
| Your work experience | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 24 |
| Your job training | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 25 |
| Taking care of family matters that interrupt the work day (i.e., daycare arrangements, children coming home from school) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 26 |
| Confidence in your ability to work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 27 |
| Working together with others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 28 |
| Taking direction from your supervisor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 29 |
| Ability to be on time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 30 |
| Ability to go to work regularly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 31 |
| Dressing appropriately for the job | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 32 |
| Your health | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 33 |
| Generally feeling fit (i.e., not tired or "under the weather") | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | – 34 |

Are there any other factors that were a disadvantage when looking for work?

_____ – –

_____ – –

_____ 35 - 38

## SECTION B: EXPERIENCE SINCE INVOLVEMENT WITH THE ERC/ESC/Sobeys

Now I would like to ask you about your work related activities after you became involved with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys.

8. a. Are you currently employed in a job outside the home?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1 | **SKIP TO Q8c.** | |
| No | 2 | | – 39 |
| DK / NR | 9 | | |

b. Have you been employed at any time since you became involved with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1 | | |
| No | 2 | **SKIP TO Q10.** | – 40 |
| DK / NR | 9 | | |

c. How many jobs have you held since you became involved with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys?

_____

DK / NR 9 41 - 42

2
1

**ASK Q9a TO Q9f FOR FIRST JOB (OR ONLY JOB) SINCE INVOLVEMENT WITH THE ERC/ESC/Sobeys. IF ONLY 1 JOB, GO TO Q10, IF NOT ASK Q9a TO Q9f FOR SECOND AND AGAIN FOR THIRD JOB.**

9 a. How did you find your first job? Was it through . . . — — —
**[READ CATEGORIES. CIRCLE ONE NUMBER ONLY.]** 2 – 4

| | First Job | Second Job | Third Job | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ERC/ESC/Sobeys referral | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Job finding club | 2 | 2 | 2 | — — |
| Radio | 3 | 3 | 3 | — — |
| T.V. | 4 | 4 | 4 | — — |
| Relative | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 – 10 |
| Employment & Immigration Commission (EIC) | 6 | 6 | 6 | |
| Newspaper | 7 | 7 | 7 | |
| Friend | 8 | 8 | 8 | |
| By yourself | 9 | 9 | 9 | |
| Other (specify) | 10 | 10 | 10 | |
| _____ | | | | |
| DK/NR | 99 | 99 | 99 | |

b. In this (first) job do (did) you work: **(READ LIST)**

| | First Job | Second Job | Third Job | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| full time | 1 | 1 | 1 | — |
| part time | 2 | 2 | 2 | — |
| seasonal | 3 | 3 | 3 | — |
| Other (specify) | 4 | 4 | 4 | |
| _____ | | | | 11 – 13 |
| DK/NR | 9 | 9 | 9 | — — |

— —

c. On an average how many hour per week do (did) you work at this job? _____ _____ _____ — — 14 – 19

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | - - - - |
| | | | | - - - - |
| d. And what is (was) your hourly wage? | _____ | _____ | _____ | - - - - 20 – 31 |
| e. How long have (did you worked (work) at this job? | | | | - - - - |
| weeks | _____ | _____ | _____ | - - - - |
| months | _____ | _____ | _____ | 32 - 43 |

**ASK ONLY IF RESPONDENT IS NO LONGER WORKING AT THIS JOB**

f. Why did this (first) job end? **(CIRCLE ONE, DO NOT READ, PROMPT IF NECESSARY)**

| | First Job | Second Job | Third Job | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quit | 1 | 1 | 1 | - - |
| Laid off | 2 | 2 | 2 | - - |
| Fired | 3 | 3 | 3 | - - |
| Term position or job ended | 4 | 4 | 4 | |
| Found better employment | 5 | 5 | 5 | 44 – 49 |
| Company bankrupt | 6 | 6 | 6 | |
| Childcare problems | 7 | 7 | 7 | |
| Medical problems | 8 | 8 | 8 | |
| Transportation problems | 9 | 9 | 9 | |
| Personal problems | 10 | 10 | 10 | |
| Pay too low | 11 | 11 | 11 | |
| Not enough hours | 12 | 12 | 12 | |
| Lack of mobility within company | 13 | 13 | 13 | |
| Other (specify) | 14 | 14 | 14 | |
| _____ | | | | |
| DK / NR | 99 | 99 | 99 | |

10. Considering each service offered by the ERC/ESC/Sobeys, I would like you to rate each as to how it helped you feel more employable. Please rate each basing your responses on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is "Not at all helpful" and 5 is "Very helpful".

    If you never received a specific service from the ERC/ESC/Sobeys, please tell me so.

**ASK THE LIST FOR THE PROGRAM THAT THEY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN.**

How would you rate _____ in helping you find a job?

| | Not at all Helpful | | | | Very Helpful | Not Applic-able | DK/NR | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Halifax <u>County</u> ERC** | | | | | | | | |
| Career counselling | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 50 |
| Personal counselling | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 51 |
| Job Finding Clubs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 52 |
| Life skills training | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 53 |
| Job search techniques | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 54 |
| Résumé preparation assistance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 55 |
| Job information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 56 |
| Referral to academic upgrading | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 57 |
| Effective parenting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 58 |
| Family Coping Skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 59 |
| Referral to other agencies | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 60 |
| Referral to other training program | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 61 |

3
1

**ASK THE LIST FOR THE PROGRAM THAT THEY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN.**

| | Not at all Helpful | | | | Very Helpful | Not Applic-able | DK/NR | 2 – 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Halifax City ESC Services** | | | | | | | | |
| Career counselling | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 5 |
| Personal counselling | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 6 |
| Job Finding Clubs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 7 |
| Résumé preparation assistance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 8 |
| Negotiating work placement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 9 |
| Job search techniques | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 10 |
| Job information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 11 |
| Referral to academic upgrading | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 12 |
| Work experience | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 13 |
| Work placement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 14 |
| Referral to other agencies | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 15 |
| Referral to other training program | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 16 |
| Assistance with additional costs (for example: renting a typewriter for work, or enrolment fees) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 17 |

**ASK THE LIST FOR THE PROGRAM THAT THEY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN.**

| | Not at all Helpful | | | | Very Helpful | Not Applic-able | DK/NR | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <u>Sobeys</u> Services | | | | | | | | |
| St. John's ambulance training | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 18 |
| Stress management | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 19 |
| Nutrition education | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 20 |
| Physical Activity Program | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 21 |
| Back care education | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 22 |
| Smoking education | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 23 |
| Assertiveness training | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 24 |
| Résumé preparation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 25 |
| Presentation (speaking) skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 26 |
| Referral to academic upgrading | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 27 |
| Bakery training program | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 28 |
| Meat cutter training | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 29 |
| Deli clerk training program | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 30 |

11. I would like to know if you feel your skills in various areas have been improved because of your involvement with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys. Please rate your answers on the same scale used before with 1 being "Not at all helpful" to 5 being "Very helpful".

    If you did not receive counselling on a specific skill, please tell me so.

> **ASK THE LIST FOR THE PROGRAM THAT THEY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN. (IF RESPONDENT REPLIES "NOT A PROBLEM" PROBE "DID IT IMPROVE YOUR SKILL AT ALL?")**

| | Not at all Helpful | | | | Very Helpful | Not Applic-able | DK/NR | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Halifax County ERC Services** | | | | | | | | |
| Building confidence, self, esteem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 31 |
| Writing a résumé | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 32 |
| Completing a job application | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 33 |
| Handling yourself in an interview situation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 34 |
| Job search skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 35 |
| Job training | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 36 |
| Education | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 37 |
| Confidence in your ability to work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 38 |
| Working together with others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 39 |
| Dressing appropriately for the job | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 40 |
| Ability to be on time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 41 |
| Ability to go to work regularly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 42 |
| Taking direction from your supervisor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 43 |
| Taking care of family matters that interrupt the work day (i.e., daycare or children coming home from school) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 44 |
| Your health | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 45 |
| Generally feeling fit (i.e., not tired or "under the weather") | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 46 |
| Parenting skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 47 |
| Budgeting skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 48 |

**ASK THE LIST FOR THE PROGRAM THAT THEY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN. (IF RESPONDENT REPLIES "NOT A PROBLEM" PROBE "DID IT IMPROVE YOUR SKILL AT ALL?")**

| | Not at all Helpful | | | | Very Helpful | Not Applic-able | DK/NR | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Halifax City ESC Services and Sobeys** | | | | | | | | |
| Building confidence, self, esteem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 49 |
| Writing a résumé | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 50 |
| Completing a job application | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 51 |
| Handling yourself in an interview situation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 52 |
| Work experience | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 53 |
| Job training | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 54 |
| Education | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 55 |
| Getting a job | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 56 |
| Confidence in your ability to work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 57 |
| Working together with others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 58 |
| Dressing appropriately for the job | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 59 |
| Ability to be on time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 60 |
| Ability to go to work regularly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 61 |
| Taking direction from your supervisor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 62 |
| Taking care of family matters that interrupt the work day (i.e., daycare or children coming home from school) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 63 |
| Your health | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 64 |
| Generally feeling fit (i.e., not tired or "under the weather") | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | – 65 |

## SECTION C: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This next set of questions will help us to summarize the study's results

12. a. Are you currently a sole support parent?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1 | | |
| No | 2 | **SKIP TO Q13.** | – 66 |
| DK / NR | 9 | | |

b. How long have you been a sole support parent?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| _____ | months | – – |
| _____ | years | – – |
| | | 67 – 70 |
| DK/NR | 99 | |

13 a. Do you participate in or are you a member of any community or volunteer organizations?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1 | | |
| No | 2 | **SKIP TO Q14.** | – 71 |
| DK / NR | 9 | | |

What are these organizations or activities:

_____ – –

_____ – –

_____ 72 – 75

b. On an average, how many hours per week do you participate in this (these) activity (ies) outside your home?

_____ – –

DK / NR 99 76 - 78

c. Do you see activities outside your home as good ways of learning about job opportunities?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1 | |
| No | 2 | – 79 |
| DK / NR | 9 | |

14. a. Currently, what is your household's primary source of income? **(CIRCLE ONE)** 4 / 1

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| job | 1 | 2 – 4 |
| parents | 2 | |
| spouse | 3 | |
| alimony | 4 | |
| Income Assistance (includes Welfare, family benefits, or other government financial support) | 5 | – – |
| Training Allowance | 6 | 5 – 6 |
| self employment | 7 | |
| none | 8 | |
| UIC | 9 | |
| Other (specify) | 10 | |
| DK / NR | 99 | |

b. How much is your total household monthly income before tax? Is it . . . **(READ CATEGORIES)**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| $500 or less | 1 | |
| between $ 501 and $ 750 | 2 | |
| between $ 751 and $1,000 | 3 | |
| between $1,001 and $1,500 | 4 | – 7 |
| between $1,501 and $2,000 | 5 | |
| over $2,000 | 6 | |
| DK / NR | 9 | |

c. How much is your total personal monthly income before tax, that is, income that you personally get from a job or financial assistance that you receive? **DO NOT INCLUDE AN "ALLOWANCE" RECEIVED FROM A SPOUSE.** Is it . . . **(READ CATEGORIES)**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| No personal income | 0 | **SKIP TO Q15** |
| $500 or less | 1 | |
| between $ 501 and $ 750 | 2 | |
| between $ 751 and $1,000 | 3 | |
| between $1,001 and $1,500 | 4 | – 8 |
| between $1,501 and $2,000 | 5 | |
| over $2,000 | 6 | |
| DK / NR | 9 | |

d. About how much of your personal monthly income do you get from . . .
**(READ EACH CATEGORY, RECORD AMOUNT OR PERCENTAGE)?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Working | _____ | – – – – |
| DK / NR | 999 | 9 – 12 |

**IF WORKING DO NOT ASK FOR UI:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Unemployment insurance | _____ | – – – – |
| DK / NR | 999 | 13 – 16 |
| Social assistance | _____ | – – – – |
| DK / NR | 999 | 17 – 20 |
| Other | _____ | – – – – |
| DK / NR | 999 | 21 – 24 |

15. a. Have you completed ERC\ESC\Sobeys?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1 | | |
| No | 2 | **SKIP TO Q19.** | – 25 |
| DK / NR | 9 | | |

b. Have you been out of the program for **more** then 3 months?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1 | | |
| No | 2 | **SKIP TO Q19.** | – 26 |
| DK / NR | 9 | | |

16 a. I would like to ask you some questions that compare certain things before your involvement with ERC/ESC/Sobeys and afterwards. I would like you to specifically think of 3 time periods.

- the 3 months **immediately before** your involvement with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys;
- the 3 months **immediately after** your involvement with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys; and
- **now.**

Now thinking about your average monthly personal income in the period 3 months **immediately after** your involvement with ERC/ESC/Sobeys, was it more or less than what it is now?

**IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS "SOMETIMES MORE OR LESS" PROBE FOR WHETHER IT WAS OVERALL MORE, LESS, THE SAME.**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| More | 1 | | |
| Less | 2 | | |
| Same | 3 | **SKIP TO Q17a.** | – 27 |
| DK / NR | 9 | | |

b. Can you tell me approximately how much this difference in your personal monthly income is? . . .
**(PROBE FOR AMOUNT)** – – – –

DK / NR _____ 28 – 31

17. a. In the period of 3 months **after your involvement** with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys, were you receiving any social assistance?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1 | | |
| No | 2 | **SKIP TO Q18.** | – 32 |
| DK / NR | 9 | | |

b. Approximately, how much did you receive per month?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| $ _____ | | **SKIP TO Q18.** | – – – – |
| DK / NR | 999 | **ASK Q17** | 33 – 36 |

c. Was this amount more or less than the social assistance you are receiving now?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| More | 1 | | |
| Less | 2 | | – 37 |
| Same | 3 | | |
| DK / NR | 9 | | |

18. Overall, thinking about your personal income and what it costs you to live now, do you feel financially better off now than you were in the 3 months **immediately following** your involvement with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1 | |
| No | 2 | – 38 |
| DK / NR | 9 | |

19. a. **ONLY READ IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS LESS THAN THREE MONTHS TO Q15:**

*I would like to ask you some questions that compare certain things before your involvement with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys and afterwards. I would like you to think of two time periods:*

- *the 3 months immediately before your involvement with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys; and*
- *now*

Now thinking about your average monthly personal income in the period 3 months **immediately before** your involvement with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys, was it more or less than what it is now?

**IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS "SOMETIMES MORE OR LESS" PROBE FOR WHETHER IT WAS OVERALL MORE, LESS, THE SAME.**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| More | 1 | | |
| Less | 2 | | – 39 |
| Same | 3 | **SKIP TO Q20a.** | |
| DK / NR | 9 | | |

b. Can you tell me approximately how much this difference in your personal monthly income is? . . .
**(PROBE FOR AMOUNT)** – – – –

DK / NR _____ 40 – 43

20. a. In the period of 3 months **before** your involvement with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys, were you receiving any social assistance?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1 | | |
| No | 2 | **SKIP TO Q21.** | – 44 |
| DK / NR | 9 | | |

b. Approximately how much did you receive?

$ _____ – – – –

DK / NR 999 45 – 48

21. Overall, thinking about your personal income and what it costs you to live now, do you feel financially better off now than you were in the 3 months **before** your involvement with the ERC/ESC/Sobeys?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1 | |
| No | 2 | – 49 |
| DK / NR | 9 | |

**These are all the questions I have,**
**Thank you for participating in our survey. Good Bye!**

Interviewer: _____

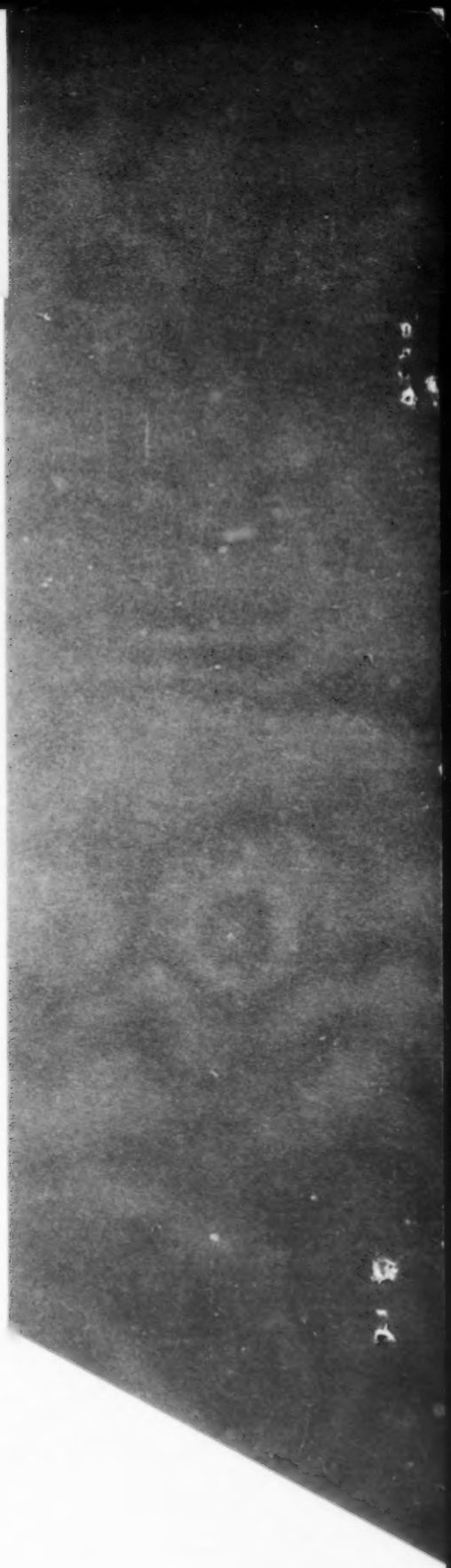
Date: _____

Respondent: _____

Phone #: _____

Time: _____

Case #: _____



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